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EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

ON THE

FIRST EPISTLE OF THE APOSTLE PETER.

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ΕΙΠΕ ΔΕ Ὁ ΚΥΡΙΟΣ. ΣΙΜΟΝ, ΣΙΜΟΝ . . . ΣΤ ΠΟΤΕ ΕΠΙΣΤΡΕΥΑΣ
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EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE XVIII.

SOBRIETY AND WATCHING UNTO PRAYER ILLUSTRATED AND ENFORCED.

1 PET. iv. 7.—But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

IN the preceding part of this chapter, the Apostle presents those to whom he wrote with a general view of Christian duty, as “living not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God;” points out to them the only and effectual means of realizing this view of Christian duty in their own experience, the keeping constantly before their minds the great characteristic truth of the gospel, that the perfect and accepted atonement made by Christ has secured for himself, and for all interested in him, rest from sin; and unfolds to them the powerful motives rising out of the statement he had made of the leading principles of evangelical truth, which urge them to follow the course prescribed to them. In the subsequent context, he proceeds to enjoin the cultivation of a variety of particular Christian dispositions, and the performance of a variety of particular Christian duties, which the circumstances in which they were placed peculiarly

required. Two of these injunctions, with the special ground on which they stand, lie before us in the verse which we have read as the text of the following discourse.

The subject which these words bring before the mind may be treated in two different ways. We may either illustrate, first, the statement on which the Apostle founds his injunctions, "The end of all things is at hand;" and then the injunction built on this statement, "Be sober, and watch unto prayer;" or we may reverse the order, and consider, first, the duties which the Apostle enjoins, and then the motive by which he urges to their performance. It does not matter much which of these two plans we adopt; but, as a choice must be made, we, upon the whole, prefer the latter.

I. THE DUTIES ENJOINED BY THE APOSTLE.

Let us then proceed to consider the duties which the Apostle enjoins. They are—sobriety, and watching unto prayer. "Be sober, and watch unto prayer." The first duty enjoined is sobriety—"Be sober."

§ 1. *Sobriety.*

In the common usage of the English language, the word sobriety is almost exclusively appropriated to denote temperance in drinking, abstinence from the undue use of intoxicating liquors. That this is a Christian duty, there can be no doubt. Drunkenness is enumerated among the works of the flesh, the indulgence in which excludes a man from inheriting the kingdom of God; and the command is most explicit—"Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess." And there can be as little doubt that this vice is utterly inconsistent with that virtue, which, under the name of sobriety, is in our text, and in so many other passages of Scripture, enjoined.

It is certain, however, that the word *sober* had a much more extensive signification at the time our translation of the Scripture was made than it has at present; a signifi-

tion more in accordance with the sense of the original word of which it is the rendering. The word here rendered sober¹ (for, as we shall immediately see, the word rendered watchful here is often translated sober), is a term which, in its primary signification, refers rather to a physical than to a moral state of the faculties of mind. It signifies to be in the full use of the rational faculties, as opposed to mental alienation or derangement. Thus, it is said of the demoniac who was cured by our Lord, that he was found by his countrymen "sitting, clothed, and in his right mind,"² sober, the same word as used here. The Apostle Paul, in his noble reply to the unmanly interruption of the Roman governor, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning hath made thee mad," says—"I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak the words of soberness." My words are not the words of a madman, but of one in full possession of his reason. And, speaking of himself and his apostolic brethren, he says, "Whether we be beside ourselves," that is, act like madmen in the world's estimation, "it is to God," it is from regard to the will of God, from a desire to promote the cause of God; "whether we be sober," that is, act cautiously and prudently, like men in the full possession and exercise of all their faculties, "it is for your sakes;" that is, it is to promote your welfare.³

This is the primary meaning of the word, and it is likely, with a direct reference to that, that the drunkard is considered as specially unworthy of the appellation sober, of a sound mind. The man who indulges in the undue use of intoxicating liquors behaves like an idiot, a person devoid of "discourse, of reason;" and, by the continued use of them, he brings himself into a state of madness. Certainly, as Solomon says, the man who allows himself to be deceived by wine, that mocker, "is not wise;" and he who carefully avoids the habit, so far proves himself to be a man in his right senses, a man of sane mind.

¹ Εσφραγισται.² Mark v. 15.³ Acts xxvi. 24, 25. 2 Cor. v. 13.

4 SOBRIETY, AND WATCHING UNTO PRAYER, [DISC. XVIII.]

The word, however, though originally significant of a physical state of the rational faculties, is usually employed in the New Testament as descriptive of a moral state of the mind. What is its precise signification will best appear from looking at the passages in which it, and the words derived from it, are employed by the sacred writers. The Apostle Paul exhorts every man “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly;” that is, to think justly, and therefore humbly.¹ The same Apostle, in his first Epistle to Timothy, exhorts Christian women, instead of decking themselves with brodered hair and gold, or pearls or costly array, to “adorn themselves with shamefacedness,” that is, with modesty; “and with sobriety,”² that is, with prudence and moderation; and they are required, verse 15, to “continue in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety,” prudence, and gravity. In the 3d chapter of the same Epistle, he tells us “a Christian bishop must be sober,” wise, prudent, moderate. In his second Epistle to Timothy, he describes the spirit or disposition which Christians have received from God, as “not the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind,” or sobriety. The spirit of Christianity is not a timid, crouching, time-serving spirit; it is an energetic, benignant, wise, moderate spirit. In the Epistle to Titus he states, that “a bishop must be sober,” that is, wise, prudent, moderate; he requires “the aged men to be sober,” which is there plainly something different from temperate; he requires the aged women to teach the young women to be “discreet;” and he commands Titus to “exhort the young men also to be sober-minded.” In all these instances sobriety is plainly wisdom, prudence, moderation. In the same Epistle he also states, that “the grace of God, which brings salvation to all, when understood and believed, teaches men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly;” to live wisely in reference to themselves, righteously with regard to their fellow

¹ Rom. xii. 3.

² 1 Tim. ii. 9.

³ Tit. i. 8; ii. 2, 4, 6, 12, 13.

men, and piously in reference to God.³ These are all the passages in the New Testament in which the word before us, or those connected with it, are employed; and, on considering them, there can be no great difficulty in determining the meaning of the exhortation before us, "Be sober."

Some interpreters consider it an exhortation to prudence, practical wisdom; others to temperance, in the extensive sense in which that word is employed in the New Testament, moderation in all things, the right regulation of our desires and pursuits. I am strongly disposed to think the Apostle's exhortation includes both of these things, and perhaps something more. I apprehend it is equivalent to, 'Exercise a sound mind in reference both to "things seen and temporal," and to "things unseen and eternal." "Be not unwise," be not like children; or, if in malice ye be as children, "in understanding be ye as men." Take heed not to be imposed on. Beware of mistaking shadows for realities, and realities for shadows. Look at things in their comparative importance, and act accordingly. Be sagacious. Be not content with partial views of the subjects in which you have so deep an interest. Look at all sides of a subject. Think before you speak. Reflect before you act. "Walk in wisdom," that is, wisely, both in regard to those who are within, and those who are without; "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."'

If Christians are thus morally sound-minded, they will discover this in the way in which they think, and feel, and act in reference to this present world. They will show that they have formed a just, and therefore a moderate, sober, estimate both of its goods and evils. They will not inordinately love the one, nor fear the other. They will not rate very high its wealth, its honours, or its pleasures. They will be moderate in their desires to possess these, and moderate in their exertions to obtain them; moderate in their attachment to them while they are possessed of them, and moderate in their regrets for them when they are deprived of them. "They who have wives will be as if they had

none," knowing that earthly relations, the closest and most endearing, must soon be dissolved; "they who weep as though they wept not," knowing that earthly sorrows, however deep, shall soon be over for ever; "they who rejoice as though they rejoiced not," knowing that earthly delights, however exquisite, are shadowy, uncertain, short-lived; "those who buy as though they possessed not," knowing that human possessions are insecure and unsatisfactory, that, "as we brought nothing into the world, we can carry nothing out of it," and feeling that "a man's life consists not in the abundance of his possessions;" "they who use this world as not abusing it," knowing that we must give account to the Supreme Judge for the use of our property; and that, unimportant as this wealth is in itself, it is awfully important viewed as connected with eternity. The great truth that "the fashion of the world passeth away," and that "the things which are unseen are eternal," will be allowed the full influence which a sound, prudent, wise mind perceives it ought to have on the whole of the temper and conduct.¹ This is Christian sobriety.

The substance of the Apostle's exhortation, then, is, 'Exercise a sound mind, a mind enlightened and transformed by Christian truth in reference to both worlds; and exhibit its practical conclusions in your wise and prudent conduct, especially in your habitual moderation in thought, feeling, and action with regard to things seen and temporal, the influence of which intoxicates and infatuates the great body of mankind, and makes them act the part of children and fools.'

§ 2. "*Watching unto prayer.*"

The second duty enjoined by the Apostle is watching unto prayer. Prayer is well defined in our Shorter Catechism to be, "the offering up of the desires to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 29-31.

This is a primary, essential duty of religion. It is the natural expression of that state of mind and heart, of thought and affection, in which religion consists. It is to religion what breath is to life. It betokens its existence, and it is the means of its continuance. It is very clearly enjoined and very strongly enforced, both by our Lord and his apostles; "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." "Men ought always to pray," to continue praying, "and not to faint." "Be careful about nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your request known to God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." "Continue instant in prayer." "Pray without ceasing." "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." "Is any man afflicted? let him pray."¹

This important duty is not, however, that which the Apostle here enjoins. His command is not, Pray; but Watch unto prayer. He takes it for granted that they did pray, that they could not but pray; but he is anxious that their prayers should be such as to gain in the highest degree the important ends of prayer. It deserves notice that the word prayer is in the plural form. It is watch unto prayers.² Some have supposed that the Apostle refers here to the four species of devotional exercise which Paul mentions in his Epistle to Timothy, "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks."³ John Huss is probably nearer the truth when he finds emphasis in the mode of expression, and says, "Watch unto prayers, not to one, but many, for 'men ought always to pray, and not to faint.'" That prayers are to be offered, habitually offered, the Apostle counts certain. He is not a Christian at all who does not pray, habitually

¹ Matt. vii. 7, 8. Luke xviii. 1. Phil. iv. 6, 7. Col. iv. 2. 1 Thess. v. 17. James v. 13, 16.

² *Εἰς τὰς προσευχάς.*

³ 1 Tim. ii. 1. *Διηστίς, προσευχάς, ἐντινξίς, εὐχαριστίας.*

pray. But he is desirous that they should "watch unto prayer."

The language is peculiar. What is its meaning? what is meant by watching? what is meant by watching unto prayer? First, what is meant by watching? This is not the word which is most frequently used to express the idea of watching, as a shepherd does his flock, or a sentinel that committed to his charge. In the original signification¹ it refers rather to a physical state of the body and mind, rather than to a moral state of the mind. It is descriptive of that state in which all the faculties are awake and active, as opposed to the state of delusion and stupor which intoxication induces; and answers nearly to our word sober, in the limited sense in which it is often used. It is always, in the New Testament, employed to express a state of mind. What that state of mind is, will best appear in this, as in the previous case, by attending to the comparatively few instances in which the word, and those connected with it, occur in the New Testament. "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak it to your shame;"² that is, shake off the mental delusion and stupor in which the intoxication of error has involved you, that, with clear and excited faculties, you may attend to this most important subject. "Let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober;"³ the same word as we have here, that is, be wakeful; let us watch, and, that we may watch, let us be wakeful. "Let us who are of the day be sober," the same word, be wakeful, "not sleep, as do others." "A bishop must be sober,⁴ vigilant," wakeful; same word we have here. "The bishops' wives," or the female superintendents, it may be either, "must be," not slanderers, but "sober,"⁵ the same word. It is difficult to see why our translators should have rendered the same word, when used of male superintendents, vigilant, when

¹ *Νεφάρει*, not *Γενναίον*, as ch. v. 7.

² 1 Thess. v. 6-8.

⁴ 1 Tim. iii. 2.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 34.

⁵ 2 Tim. iii. 11.

used of female superintendents, sober. In both cases wakeful vigilance is the idea: "But watch thou in all things." Keep awake, and be active in the discharge of all thy duties.¹ "Speak the words that become sound doctrine, that the aged men be sober,"² vigilant in the margin. The only other places where the word occurs in the New Testament, is in this Epistle: "Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober,"³ where the idea of wakefulness or vigilance seems better to suit the context than sobriety, either in its stricter or more extended meaning. "Be sober, be vigilant;"⁴ be wakeful, and not only be wakeful, but actively watch. From all these passages it seems plain that the Apostle's exhortation is, Be wakeful, be on the alert; look around you; with excited attention actively exert your mind.

But what are we to understand by being watchful, or watching unto prayer? The phrase has received two translations. Be watchful in prayer, that is, while engaged in prayer; and be watchful, in order to prayer. There can be no doubt that they misinterpret the passage who refer it to the vigils or nightly prayers of the ancient church. This is an interpretation which very properly may take its place alongside of that which would render repent by do penance. The primitive Christians were obliged to have their common "prayers," as well as "the doctrine" and "the breaking of bread," during the night, for they durst not assemble during the day. But there does not seem any reference to that here, which was indeed more a mere matter of necessity than of choice; not a duty in itself, but only in the particular circumstances in which they are placed. All that is included in either of the two renderings mentioned, and something more, is expressed in a translation, which, if the words do not demand, they certainly admit. "Be watchful, or watch in reference to prayer."

Vigilance requires to be exerted in reference to every duty.

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 5.

² Tit. ii. 2.

³ 1 Pet. i. 13.

⁴ 1 Pet. v. 8.

We need to watch as to the principles in which they originate, the manner in which they are performed, the motives which influence us in performing them, the end we seek to gain by performing them. But there is special need of vigilance in reference to prayer. Christians should be watchful in reference to proper subjects of prayer, to fit opportunities for prayer, as to hinderances from prayer, as to the proper manner of prayer, and as to the results or consequences of prayer.

The attention of Christians should be actively alive to the circumstances, in the world, in the church, in the various spheres of relative duty which they occupy, in their own individual experience, which ought to be made the subjects of prayer; and in every case see that what they pray for be agreeable to God's will, something they are warranted to ask, and which he has promised to grant. They should look at every thing in this particular aspect, that so "in every thing they may in prayer and supplication make their requests known to God." They should wakefully observe what may be fit opportunities for escaping from the world to hold communion with God, that they may carefully improve them. Thus did David watch unto prayer, when he said, "As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and He shall hear my voice."

They should watch against worldliness of mind, and especially against wilful transgressions, remembering that, "if we regard iniquity in our heart, God will not hear us."¹

They should watch in reference to the manner of prayer when engaged in it; taking care that it is prayer, and not merely saying prayers; that they serve him who is a Spirit, with their spirits "in spirit and truth;" that they "present a living sacrifice;" that they "yield rational worship;" that they "pray in the Spirit," depending on the promised influence of the Holy Ghost as "the Spirit of grace and sup-

¹ Psal. lv. 17; lxvi. 18.

plication ;” that they pray “ in faith, nothing wavering ; for he that wavereth is as a wave of the sea driven of the wind and tossed—let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord ;” that they pray with intense desire, being “ instant in prayer ;” that they pray in humble submission, saying, “ Not my will, but thine be done.” ¹

Finally, they should watch in reference to the results of prayer. Like Habakkuk, they would “ stand on their watch, and set them upon the tower to see what he will say to them.” “ I will direct my prayer to thee,” says David, “ and look up.”² Christians “ should look after their prayers, and hear what the Lord will speak, observe what the Lord will do ; that if he grant what they ask, they may be thankful ; that if he deny, they may be patient and humbly inquire the cause ; that if he defer, they may continue to pray and wait, and not faint. They should look up, or look out, as they who have shot an arrow, looking to see how near it has come to the mark. We lose much of the comfort of our prayers for want of observing the returns of them.”³ So much, then, for the illustration of the two duties which the Apostle here enjoins : Sobriety, and watching unto prayer.

II. MOTIVE URGING TO SOBRIETY, AND WATCHING UNTO PRAYER—“ THE END OF ALL THINGS IS AT HAND.”

Let us now, secondly, attend to the motive by which he enforces his exhortation to these duties. “ The end of all things is at hand ;” therefore “ be sober, and watch unto prayer.”

“ The end of all things” is a phrase, which, taken by itself, most naturally calls up the idea of the final termination of the present order of things, which is so often mentioned in the sacred writings ; when He who has established it shall proclaim, “ It is done,” and the dead shall live,

¹ John iv. 24. Rom. xii. 1. *λογισθητε λατρευοντες*. Jude 20. James i. 6, 7. Col. iv. 1.

² Habak. ii. 1. Psal. v. 3.

³ Matthew Henry.

and the living shall be changed, and all shall be judged; when death shall be swallowed up in life, and time be no more, having been lost in eternity; when “the heavens and the earth that now are shall be dissolved, the heavens passing away with a great noise, the earth also, and the works that are therein being burnt up, the very element melting with fervent heat; and the new heavens and the new earth, wherein righteousness is, and shall dwell, shall take their place.” These solemn truths are well fitted to operate as powerful motives on all who believe them, to be sober, and to watch unto prayer. “What manner of persons ought we to be,” says the Apostle; “in all holy conversation and godliness,” “looking for, and hastening to, the coming of this day of God.” “Wherefore, beloved, seeing that we look for such things, be diligent, that ye be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.” “He who,” to use the language of a great writer, “has seen, as through a telescope, the glorious appearance of the Supreme Judge, the solemn state of his majestic person, the splendid pomp of his magnificent and vastly numerous retinue, the obsequious throng of glorious celestial creatures, doing homage to their eternal king; the swift flight of his royal guards sent forth into the four winds to gather the elect, and covering the face of the heavens with their spreading wings; the universal attention of all to that loud-sounding trumpet that shakes the pillars of the world, pierces the inward caverns of the earth, and resounds through every part of the encircling heavens; the many myriads of joyful expectants arising, changing, putting on glory, taking wing, and contending upwards to join themselves to the triumphant heavenly host; the judgment set; the books opened; the frightful, amazed looks of surprised wretches; the equal administration of the final judgment; the adjudication of all to their eternal states; the heavens rolled up as a scroll; the earth and all things therein consumed and burnt up:”¹

¹ Howe. Vanity of man as mortal.

Surely that man must be *sobber*, deeply, calmly considerate, knowing how present character and conduct is to affect future events; and maintaining a steady restraint and moderation of all his vicious passions in reference to a world, the fashion of which is thus to pass away: Surely he must watch unto prayer, watch and pray always, that he may be accounted worthy to escape “the perdition of ungodly men,” and “stand before the Son of man,” in the judgment. This is a powerful motive, fitted to influence the minds and hearts and conduct of all believers in all countries and ages till the end come.

But there are obvious difficulties in this mode of interpretation. “The end of all things is said to be at hand;” that is, very near. Now, eighteen centuries have wellnigh run their course since these words were uttered, and the end of the world has not come—nay, when we think of the number and magnitude of the events that must take place before it arrives, we cannot concur with those who are of opinion that it is very soon to take place. “The end is not yet.”

To meet and remove this difficulty, it has been remarked by some, that the age of the Messiah is the last age; that no such great event as the flood, or the giving of the law, or the coming of the Word in flesh, stands between them who live under that age and the end of the world; so that it may be said to be *near* all who live under the gospel economy; by others that it is *near*, if not in the calculations of time, in those of eternity, with him, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; and by a third class, that as the state of every man is fixed at death, that as death leaves him judgment will find him, the end of all things *to him* is not far off. I must say that these modes of getting over the difficulty do not appear to me to be satisfactory; and that the Apostle’s obvious design is to intimate that the events expressed in the phrase, “the end of all things,” were just about to take place.

Their view of the matter is still less satisfactory, who tell

us that the Apostles really did expect the immediate dissolution of the world. We know there were persons who so misunderstood such statements as that before us; but we find the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, warning them against such a mistake, and telling them that the day of Christ, in the sense of the day of the last judgment, was not at hand.¹ Besides, it is not with what the Apostles, exercising their own unassisted judgments, expected, but with what the inspiring Spirit spoke by them, that we have to do.

After some deliberation, I have been led to adopt the opinion of those, that “the end of all things” here is the entire and final end of the Jewish economy in the destruction of the Temple and City of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the holy people. That was at hand; for this epistle seems to have been written a very short while before these events took place, not improbably after the commencement of “the wars and rumours of war,” of which our Lord spake. This view will not appear strange to any one who has carefully weighed the terms in which our Lord had predicted these events, and the close connexion which the fulfilment of these predictions had with the interests and duties of Christians, whether in Judea or in Gentile countries.

It is quite plain, that, in our Lord’s predictions, the expressions “the end,” and probably “the end of the world,” are used in reference to the entire dissolution of the Jewish economy.² The events of that period were very minutely foretold; and our Lord distinctly stated that the existing generation should not pass away till all things, respecting “this end,” should be fulfilled. This was to be a “season of suffering to all; of trial, severe trial, to the followers of Christ; of dreadful judgment on his Jewish opposers, and of glorious triumph to his religion. To this period there are repeated references in the apostolical epistles: “Know-

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 1-3.

² Matt. xxiv. 3, 6, 14, 34. Mark xiii. 30. Luke xxi. 32.

ing the time," says the Apostle Paul, "that now it is high time to awake out of sleep ; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." "Be patient," says the Apostle James ; "stablish your hearts ; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." "The judge standeth before the door."¹ Our Lord's predictions must have been very familiar to the minds of Christians at the time this was written. They must have been looking forward with mingled awe and joy, fear and hope, to the accomplishment ; "looking for the things which were coming upon the earth ;" and it was peculiarly natural for Peter to refer to these events, and to refer to them in words similar to those used by our Lord, as he was one of the disciples, who, sitting with his Lord in full view of the city and temple, heard these predictions uttered.

The Christians inhabiting Judea had a peculiar interest in these predictions and their fulfilment. But all Christians had a deep interest in them. The Christians of the regions in which those to whom Peter wrote, were chiefly converted Jews. As Christians, they had cause to rejoice in the prospect of the accomplishment of these predictions, as greatly confirming the truth of Christianity, and removing some of the greatest obstructions in the way of its progress ; the persecutions of the Jews, and the confounding, in the mind of the Gentiles, Christianity with Judaism, viewing it as merely a Jewish sect. But while they rejoiced, they had cause to rejoice with trembling, as their Lord had plainly intimated that it was to be a season of very great trial to his friends, as well as of vengeance against his enemies. "The end of all things" which was at hand, seems to be the same thing as the judgment of the quick and the dead, which the Lord was ready to enter on, the judgment time for which was come ; which was to begin with the house of God, and then to be executed fully on those who obeyed not the gospel of God, the unbelieving Jews ; in which the

¹ Rom. xiii. 11, 12. James v. 8, 9.

righteous would scarcely be saved, and the ungodly and wicked be fearfully punished.

The contemplation of such events as just at hand, was well fitted to operate as a motive to sobriety, and vigilance unto prayer. These were just the tempers and exercises peculiarly called for in such circumstances; and they are just the dispositions and employments required by our Lord when he speaks of these days of trial and wrath. "Take heed of yourselves," says our Lord, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come on you unawares: for as a snare shall it come upon all who dwell on the earth. Watch, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are about to come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."¹ It is difficult not to believe that the Apostle had these very words in his mind when he wrote the passage now before us.

While these exhortations had a peculiar appropriateness to those to whom they were originally addressed, while they received peculiar enforcement from the circumstances in which they were placed, they are plainly exhortations to which Christians, in all countries and ages, are called to attend; and especially when placed in circumstances similar in any way to those in which they were primarily given. We are obviously placed in such circumstances. There is now, as then, and to a still greater extent, a breaking up of old systems. Dynasties and hierarchies are shaking into dissolution. Society is in one of the great states of transition, which occur but at distant intervals in the history of our race. Seldom has the state of our times been more graphically and justly described, than in the words of a living writer—What times are coming upon the earth we know not; but the general expectation of persons of all characters in all nations, is an instinct implanted by God to warn us of a coming storm. Not one nation, but all; not

¹ Luke xxi. 34-36.

one class of thinkers, but all they who fear and they who hope, and who hope and fear things opposite; they who are immersed in their worldly schemes, and they who look for some coming of God's kingdom; they who watch this world's signs, and they who watch for the next,—alike have their eye intently fixed on somewhat that is coming; though whether it be the vials of his wrath or the glories of his kingdom, or whether the one shall be herald to the other, none can tell. They who calculate what is likely, speak of it; they who cannot, *feel* its coming: the spirits of the unseen world seem to be approaching to us, and awe comes upon us and trembling, which maketh all bones to shake. There is upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth. Times of trouble there have been before; but such a time in which every thing, every where, tends in one direction to one mighty struggle of one sort—of faith with infidelity, lawlessness with rule, Christ with Antichrist, there seems never to have been till now." "God warneth us, by the very swiftness with which all things are moving around us, that it is HE who is impelling them. Man cannot impart such speed, nor rouse the winds from the four quarters of the heavens, nor bring men's varying wills into a uniform result; and therewith he warns us to beware how we attempt to guide what he is thus manifestly governing."¹

The end of many things seems indeed approaching. Popery, though making convulsive struggles, must ere long expire. Babylon, while repairing her battlements, is trembling to her fall. The long captivity of Israel is drawing to its close. The Mohammedan delusion is effete. The idols are about to be abolished. The sanctuary is about to be cleansed. Political despotism and ecclesiastical tyranny are doomed. But before the end of these things, what "wars and rumours of wars," what siftings of men and sys-

¹ Pusey.

18 SOBRIETY, AND WATCHING UNTO PRAYER. [DISC. XVIII.

tems! What struggles, what sacrifices, what sufferings are coming, are at hand! What need of faith and patience, of dependence and exertion, of caution and vigour! Never since the destruction of the Jewish economy was there a louder call to Christians to attend to the inspired declarations, "Be sober, and watch unto prayer."

DISCOURSE XIX.

ON THE MAINTENANCE AND MANIFESTATION OF BROTHERLY LOVE.¹

1 PET iv. 8-11.—And, above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

HOLY brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling! In the sacred services of the forenoon, we have, in the most solemn manner, recognised the intimate relation in which we stand to each other as Christians. We have declared, that “though many, we are one body, having partaken of one bread,” “the bread which came down from heaven, and has been given for the life of the world;” and “having all drunk into one Spirit,” “the Spirit of love, and power, and of a sound mind,” which Jesus being glorified has given to all who believe in him. We have, over the instituted emblems of the holy, suffering humanity of our Lord, made the good profession, that we have one God and Father, Jehovah; one Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ; one faith, the faith of his gospel; one baptism, the baptism of his Spirit; one hope, the hope of his salvation. We have avowed ourselves brethren in Christ, and pledged ourselves to perform

¹ This discourse was delivered immediately after the administration of the Lord's Supper.

all the mutual duties which rise out of a relation so intimate and so sacred.

It cannot then be inopportune to direct your attention to an inspired account of some of those duties; and such an account is contained in the paragraph I have just read, which plainly refers to the temper and conduct towards each other by which Christians should be characterised. The whole truth on this subject may be very briefly stated. The entire duty of Christians to each other is summed up in one word, love; brotherly love. The *maintenance* of brotherly love, that is the temper by which Christians should be characterised; the *manifestation* of brotherly love, that is the conduct by which Christians should be characterised.

In the text, both of these are plainly enjoined and powerfully enforced. The maintenance of brotherly love is thus enjoined: "Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves." And it is thus enforced: "for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." The manifestation of brotherly love is thus enjoined: "Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, so let him minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth." And it is thus enforced: "that God may in all things be glorified through Jesus Christ." The *maintenance* and *manifestation* of the love of the brethren, *enjoined* and *recommended*, are thus obviously the substance of the text; and to unfold the meaning of the injunctions, and to point out the force of the recommendations, are the objects I shall endeavour to gain in the following discourse.

I.—THE MAINTENANCE OF BROTHERLY LOVE.

§ 1. *The duty explained.*

And first, of the *maintenance* of brotherly love. "Above

all things, have fervent charity among yourselves : for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." The injunction first calls for our consideration : "Above all things, have fervent charity among yourselves."¹

In the ordinary use of language, charity is expressive either of almsgiving, or of that disposition which leads a man to take fully as favourable a view of the character and conduct of other men as facts will justify. In Scripture, however, it is never employed in either of these senses. It is uniformly used as equivalent to the word "love" in its highest sense ; and it would have prevented some hazardous misapprehensions and misinterpretations had the original term been uniformly thus rendered. I have had occasion to remark elsewhere, that "there is a love which every man owes to every other man, without reference to his spiritual state or character, merely because he is a man,—a sincere desire to promote his welfare. This is the love which the Apostle Paul, with obvious propriety, represents as "the fulfilling of the law," so far as it refers to our duties to our fellow-men ; for he who is under its influence can do no ill to any man ; he cannot interfere injuriously with his personal property or reputation, but on the contrary must, as he has opportunity, do good to all men. Good-will is the essence, indeed the sole component element, of this love.

The love referred to in the text is obviously more limited in its range, and, for that very reason, much more comprehensive in its elementary principles. It is not love towards all men that the Apostle here enjoins, but "love among themselves." This affection is called "the love of the brethren," "brotherly kindness," to contradistinguish it from the bene-

¹ The subject of this section has already been considered in Discourses VI., XII., and XV. I have preferred laying myself open to the charge of self-repetition, rather than either, by mere reference to these discourses, giving this discourse a mangled appearance, or, by studiously seeking novelty in the form of expression, running the risk of injuring the substance of the illustration of brotherly love. Similar reasons have led to similar repetitions in other parts of these volumes.

volent regard which should be cherished towards all human beings; for though all men are brethren, as they have one Father, one God has created them, they are not all brethren in the Christian sense of that expression. The appellation is limited to what has always been a comparatively small class of persons, genuine Christians. The affection spoken of in the text can only be exercised by them : it can only be exercised to them. A man who is unchristian, who is anti-christian in his opinions, and temper, and conduct, may highly esteem, may tenderly love a true Christian, but he cannot cherish to him the love which Christians have “among themselves,” “brotherly kindness :” he loves him not because he is, but notwithstanding he is a Christian. A Christian may love, he ought to love, he does love, all mankind ; he desires the happiness of every being capable of happiness ; he esteems what is estimable, he loves what is amiable, he admires what is admirable ; he pities what is suffering wherever he meets with it ; but he cannot extend beyond the sacred pale the love which those within it have “among themselves ;” he cannot regard with brotherly kindness any one but a Christian brother. None but a Christian can be either the object or the subject of this benevolent affection. None but a Christian can either be the agent or the recipient in the kind offices in which it finds expression.

This limitation is matter not of choice but of necessity. Most gladly would the Christian regard all his fellow men as fellow Christians, if they would but allow him to do so, by becoming Christians ; but till they do so, it is in the nature of things impossible that he should feel towards them as if they were what they are not. This affection originates in the possession of a peculiar mode of thinking and feeling, produced in the mind by the Holy Spirit, through the knowledge and belief of Christian truth, which naturally leads those who are thus distinguished to a sympathy of mind and heart, of thought and affection, with all who, under the same influence, have been led to entertain the same views and to cherish the same dispositions. They

love one another "in the truth, for the truth's sake that dwelleth in them, and shall be with them for ever."¹

This circumstance, which necessarily limits this principle as to its sphere of operation, gives it a greater intensity and activity in that sphere, as well as much greater comprehension of elementary principles. It includes good-will in its highest degree; but to this it adds moral esteem, complacential delight, tender sympathy. This it does in every instance; but the degree in which these elementary principles are to be found, in individual cases of brotherly kindness, depends on a variety of circumstances; and chiefly on the degree in which he who exercises it, and he to whom it is exercised, approaches the completeness and perfection of the Christian character. Every Christian loves every other Christian, when he knows him; but the more accomplished the Christian is, whether the subject or object of brotherly love, the more does he put forth or draw forth its holy, benignant influence.

The end of all love is the good or the happiness of its object, as that happiness is conceived of by its subject. The great end which Christian brotherly love contemplates, is the well-being of its object, viewed as a Christian man; his deliverance from ignorance, and error, and sin, in all their forms and all their degrees; his progressive, and ultimately his complete, happiness, in entire conformity to the mind and will of God; the unclouded sense of the Divine favour, the uninterrupted enjoyment of the Divine fellowship, the being like "the ever-blessed" Holy, Holy, Holy One. It does not overlook any of the interests of its object; but it views them all in reference, in subordination, to the enjoyment of the salvation that is in Christ, with eternal glory.

This is "the love among themselves" of which the Apostle speaks; and his injunction with regard to it is, "Above all things, have fervent love among yourselves." The original word rendered fervent is a very expressive one.² Its primi-

¹ 2 John i. 2.

² ΕΝΤΕΝ.

tive and proper signification is, extensive and wide-reaching; and, when applied to love, it describes a benevolent affection, which takes a wide view of the capacities for happiness of its objects, and which seeks its gratification in having all these capacities completely filled; the love expressed in the words of the Apostle—"this also we wish, even your perfection;" or, in his prayer, "that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." Nothing short of the perfect holiness, the perfect happiness, of its objects, can satisfy it.

This term is also used to signify *intensity*; as when it is said of our Lord, that, "being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly." The love which the Apostle calls on Christians to maintain, is not cold, not even lukewarm; it is fervent love; an active principle like *fire*; not lying dormant in the mind, but influencing all the powers of action; a love which will make the exertion or suffering necessary to gain its purposes, be readily engaged in and submitted to.

This word, too, is employed to signify *continuance*, as when it is said, that "prayer was made without ceasing for Peter," when Herod had cast him into prison, intending that he should never come out but to his execution. The love here referred to is love that is to last for life, and which even death is not to extinguish. It is an extensive, intense, permanent affection, which the Apostle exhorts Christians to maintain towards each other.

The precise import of his exhortation differs somewhat, according to the place you give to the epithet "fervent" in it. If with our translators you read, "Have fervent charity among yourselves," the word *have* has the sense of *hold*. He takes for granted that as Christians they were in possession of this fervent love, and his exhortation is to hold it fast. Let not your fervent love wax cold. If with other interpreters, and fully as much in conformity with the construction of the original text, we read "Have love among yourselves, *fervent*," the Apostle takes for granted that they had love among themselves; if they had not they were not Christians at all; and his exhortation to them is, 'See that your love

be in extent, in intensity, in its continuance, what it ought to be.' In this case, the passage is exactly parallel with that in chapter i. 22, where he takes for granted, that they had "purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren;" and exhorts them to "see that they love one another with a pure heart fervently." The exhortation unites in it both of Paul's exhortations in reference to the same subject: "Be kindly affectioned to one another, in brotherly love;"¹ that is, let your love be intense, and "Let brotherly love continue;" that is, let your love be permanent.

The only other point in the Apostle's injunction to the maintenance of brotherly love that requires illustration, is the qualifying phrase, "above all things."² Some have supposed that the Apostle's object was to call on Christians to show their love to one another before all: 'Before all men, have love among yourselves fervent. Let your mutual love serve the purpose which our Lord meant it to serve. "Hereby," said he, "shall all men know you to be my disciples, if ye have love one to another."³ Be not ashamed of one another, especially when involved in suffering for Christ. When that "iniquity abounds" let not your love among yourselves wax cold. Let not these waters quench it, let not these floods drown it.⁴ Let it be so fervent that even the heathen may be constrained to say, "Behold, how these Christians love one another." We are rather disposed to consider the words as intended to mark the very great importance of this fervent love among themselves, as that without which the great purpose of Christianity could not be gained, either in the individual or in the society, either within the pale of the Christian church or beyond it; for it is love that "edifies" both the Christian and the Christian church. He who has love proves that he has faith, for "faith works by love;" and he who has love is sure to have holiness, for

¹ Rom. xii. 10.

³ John xiii. 35.

² ὅλα ταῦτα.

⁴ Matt. xxiv. 12.

“love is the fulfilling of the law.” He who loves his brother can do no harm to his brother, he must do him all the good in his power.¹

Paul’s estimate of the comparative value of love, was not lower than that of his brother Apostle; and his eulogium is the best commentary on the words, “have charity above all things.” “Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: for whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away: for we know in part, and prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall vanish away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth Faith, Hope, and Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”² If charity be all, and do all, this, surely it is not wonderful that Paul should enjoin Christians “above all,” or in addition to all other Christian graces, that they should “put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness;”³ the

¹ 1 Cor. viii. 1. Gal. v. 6. Rom. xiii. 10.

² 1 Cor. xiii.

³ Col. iii. 14.

perfect bond; and that Peter should exhort them, “above all, to have fervent charity among themselves.”

§ 2.—*The duty recommended.*

Having thus attempted to unfold the meaning of the *Apostle's injunction*, respecting the maintenance of brotherly love, let us now endeavour to point out the force of his *recommendation* on this subject—“Have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity will cover a multitude of sins.”

I do not know if, in the book of God, there can be found a passage which has been more grossly and dangerously misinterpreted than this. Though certainly not among those passages which are “hard to be understood,” yet by the crafty and self-interested, “the unlearned and unstable,” it has been “wrested,” it is to be feared, “to their own” and other men’s “destruction.” Charity has been interpreted as equivalent to almsgiving, the devoting sums of money to benevolent, and what were termed pious, purposes; and has been represented as efficacious in covering a multitude of sins from the eye of the supreme Judge, on the day when he will finally fix the eternal states of men, securing acquittal where otherwise there must have been condemnation; or charity has been identified with a disposition the reverse of censorious; and this passage, along with the words of our Lord, “Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again;”¹ interpreted by the sound rather than the sense, has been employed to excite false hopes in the minds of worldly, unbelieving, impenitent men, as if their lenient judgments of their fellow sinners, whose conduct deserved censure, should plead, and plead successfully, for a lenient sentence to themselves, “in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

What a fearful proof of the stupidity and wickedness of

¹ Matt. vii. 1, 2.

fallen man, that, amid the clear light of revelation, such misrepresentations should be made and credited! Surely, both the teacher and the taught have given themselves up to strong delusions, before they could make or believe such lies as these. What degrading views of the Divine character, and of the Divine law, must those men have, who think that pardon and ultimate freedom from the penal effects of sin, can be secured by any thing man can do, much more can be bought with money; or that God will reward what is ordinarily a false judgment, by another false judgment! Even charity in the true sense of the word, and all its blessed fruits, cannot cover sin, cannot obtain the pardon of sin; if for no other reason, for this, that they cannot be the procuring cause of that of which they themselves are the results. The free grace of God exercised in harmony with justice, through the atoning sacrifice of Christ, to the believing sinner, can alone cover sin in the sense of forgiveness. The love of God is the sole moving cause; the atonement of the Son the sole meritorious cause; the faith of the gospel, produced by the Holy Spirit, the sole instrumental cause of forgiveness.

Setting aside this most monstrous perversion of Scripture, which scarcely deserves even the passing notice we have taken of it, let us inquire what the Apostle does mean when he says, that "charity shall cover the multitude of sins;" and endeavour to show how, what he means in these words, is fitted to operate as a motive to Christians to "have fervent charity among themselves."

It is right to state, that the Apostle's assertion is not, that love shall cover, or, as it is in the margin, will cover, but love covers, not *the* multitude, but *a* multitude of sins. "Love covereth a multitude of sins." But whose love is it that covers sins? and whose sins are they which love covers? and what is it that love does in reference to sin when it covers it?

Some would interpret "charity," of the love of God or of Christ; and, "a multitude of sins," of all the violations of

the Divine law by those Christians who are exhorted to have fervent love among themselves. ‘God has loved you; his love has led him to forgive you. “He has forgiven the iniquity of his people; he has covered all their sins.” Christ hath loved you, and has shed his blood in order that your sins might be forgiven in consistency with justice, in glorious illustration of justice. He has covered your sins with his righteousness. He having been made sin for you, you being made the righteousness of God in him. “Brethren, if God,” if Christ, have “so loved you,” surely “ye should love one another.” This love to you all was fervent love. Should not your love to one another be fervent too? Should not you who have been forgiven, forgive; especially forbear with and forgive your brethren, as God and Christ have forborne and forgiven both you and them.’

This, in itself, is most important truth, and those are the strongest of all motives to mutual Christian love; yet I think every person must feel, on looking at the passage, that this sense is rather dragged into it than drawn out of it; and it is plain, from the original text,¹ that the love in the second clause is the same as the love in the first clause. “Have fervent love among yourselves: for *love—the love—this love—covereth* a multitude of sins.” It is, then, the love, the fervent love of the brethren, that covers a multitude of sins, whatever and wherever these sins may be, and whatever may be meant by covering them.

The words, “love covereth a multitude of sins,” are a quotation from the Old Testament; and it is very possible, that, by looking at them in their original connexion, we may find some assistance in apprehending more distinctly both their meaning and reference here. They are to be found in Prov. x. 12, “Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins;” that is, a man under the influence of hatred, where there is no offence, where no sin against him creates it, “stirs up strife,” he provokes, he magnifies, he multi-

¹ Εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ἀγάπην ἡμετέραν ἔχοντες ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη. κ. τ. λ.

plies offences. He, as it were, invites attack, and he commonly does not invite it in vain ; but on the other hand, love, that is the man under the influence of benignant principle, he covers all sins, he puts down all strifes and offences, he treats them as if they were not, he makes them as if they had never been. I think it must be very plain to all, that the sins here referred to are offences committed by one brother against another ; and that the assertion of the Apostle is, that a brother, under the influence of that fervent charity which he has been enjoining, will cover these offences, even though there should be many of them ; will, so far as the peace and edification of the brotherhood, whether as individuals or a body, are concerned, really make them as if they had never existed.

If Christians were as much under the influence of love as they ought to be, sins against each other, "offences," would not exist ; for "love doth no ill to his neighbour :" in other words, the man entirely under the influence of love can do no injury to his neighbour. His person, his property, his reputation, his feelings, all his interests, are perfectly safe. The whole law, in reference to a Christian brother, is summed up in love. We owe no man any thing, but to love one another.¹ If that debt is discharged, our duty is done. Were Christians habitually acting under the power of fervent charity, there would be no sins, no offences to cover. But such a state of things has never yet existed. We have no reason to think ever it will exist in this world. "Offences," says the Master, "must come ;" and, if they are not met in the spirit of love, they will grow and multiply. The spark will become a flame, and the flame a conflagration.

But "love covereth sins." Fervent charity prevents a man from giving any occasion for offence. There is always a want of love in the offending brother ; the offence proves

¹ Rom. xiii. 8. *Οφείλει* is considered by some interpreters as indicative, not imperative, here. This exegesis seems better to suit the Apostle's current of thought than the more usual one.

this; but had there been more love in the offended brother, and had that love been more plainly manifested, the offence might never have existed. Had there been more Christian, that is, more affectionate, behaviour on the part of him who is offended, there might have been less, there might have been no, unchristian conduct on the part of the offender. Fervent love prevents any thing like a handle being given to the unkindly feelings of others to take hold of. A Christianly benignant disposition naturally leads a man to give his Christian brethren credit for the same temper which animates himself, and consequently prevents him from being on the look-out for offences. He is unwilling to think that a Christian brother means to injure him, for he has no disposition to injure any brother; and he will gladly admit any reasonable account of a piece of conduct which may wear an unkindly aspect, rather than have recourse to this supposition. This temper makes him overlook much which a man of a less benignant disposition would account offence.

And when offence does present itself in a form that there is no mistaking it; under the power of fervent love he covers it, inasmuch as he gives no unnecessary publicity to it. He does not conceal from the offending brother that he is aware of what he has done, and that he is sensible of the true character of his conduct. No; as no brother can give another just offence, without, in the estimation of that brother, having violated the law of their common Lord, charity, however fervent, does not blind him either to the reality or the magnitude of the fault. Were he deficient in charity, he might be silent to him, while eloquent to others, respecting the offence. He might cherish hatred to the offender in his heart, bear a grudge against him, and meditate vengeance. But he who loves his neighbour as himself, will not so hate his offending brother in his heart; he will not suffer sin on him, he will surely rebuke him. But he will *cover* the sin by, as far as lies in his power, concealing it, till he has used every practicable

method to have it covered by hearty forgiveness or penitent acknowledgment ; and if he be obliged to discover the offence in the first sense, it is only so far as is necessary, in order to having it covered in the second and more important sense.

The offended brother, the man sinned against, if he act under the influence of fervent love, follows the wise advice of the apocryphal sage : “ Admonish thy friend ; it may be he hath not done it ; and if he have done it, that he do it not again. Admonish thy friend ; it may be he hath not said it ; and if he have, that he speak it not again. Admonish a friend ; for many a time it is a slander, and believe not every tale. There is one that slippeth in his speech, but not from the heart ; and who is he who hath not offended with his tongue ? ”¹ He obeys the law of the Master in heaven. If his brother trespass against him, he goes and tells him his fault by himself alone ; and if he hear him, then the fault, which he has never divulged, has been covered ; so far as he is concerned, both concealed and forgiven. It is as if it had not been. But if the offending brother will not hear him, he takes with him one or two more of the brethren, that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every thing may be established. If he hear them, then, too, the sin is covered. It is dismissed from his mind, and from the minds of those who were necessarily informed of it, and they regard their brother as before he had offended. But if he neglect to hear them, the sin, which in the sense of concealment can be covered no longer, must be told to the assembly of the elders or of the brethren ; and if the offending brother hear them, and make due acknowledgment, even then love covers the sin, and receives with cordiality the offending brother. But if he obstinately persist in opposition to the mind of the assembly, then the offence is covered by the offender being removed from the society ; his conduct being henceforward viewed as that of a man not connected

¹ Eccclus. xix. 13.

with the brotherhood—"a heathen man and a publican;" and therefore not likely to be a cause of contention in the church, nor a scandal or stumbling-block to the world.¹

Love, where it is fervent, will operate in this way, not only in one instance, but in many instances; not only in the case of one offending brother, but of every offending brother; and not in the case only of one or a few offences, but in the case of many offences, even from the same brother. The course prescribed by our Lord in his law, is just the course which the love produced in the heart by his Spirit, by means of his truth, naturally suggests. "It is impossible," says the Master, "but that offences should come. Take heed to yourselves. If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him; and if he trespass against thee seven times in a-day, and seven times in a-day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him." "How oft shall my brother," said Peter, with characteristic forwardness, "sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Unto seventy times seven."² So long as you and he stand in the relation of brothers, love must be ready to cover his sins, however numerous. Such seems to me the meaning of the Apostle's statement: "Charity," that is, such fervent charity as he had enjoined in the preceding clause, "covers a multitude of sins."

A very few words will suffice for showing the force which this statement has as a motive to the duty which the Apostle has enjoined. "Have fervent charity among yourselves, *for* charity covereth a multitude of sins." "Offences must needs come." Brethren will sin against brethren. If these sins are not covered, what is the consequence likely to be? "The beginning of strife is like the letting out of waters." Contentions will be extended and perpetuated. There will be schisms in the body. Individual edification will be materially interfered with. The Spirit of Love will be grieved.

¹ Matt. xviii. 15, 17.

² Matt. xviii. 7, 21, 22. Luke xvii. 3, 4.

The Holy Dove will be driven away. The church will become impure, schismatical, utterly unfit for answering her great purpose, to exhibit and to extend the religion of love. Biting and devouring each other, Christians will be consumed of each other. Roots of bitterness will spring up and flourish, and the result will be trouble and defilement. There will be envying and strife, confusion and every evil work. Plausibility will be given to the objections of infidels, and men will be deterred from connecting themselves with so suicidal a society, as in this case the church would prove itself.

This must be the result if sins are not covered, and sins can only be covered by charity, by fervent charity; and though these sins are many (the more the pity that it should be so), if there is so much fervent charity among the brethren as to cover them, what is the result? The excellence of Christian truth, the power of Divine grace, are just so much the more illustriously displayed in triumphing over the unruly passions and the worldly interests of men. The disjointed yet sound members, reset by the skilful tender hand of enlightened charity, become more firmly united and stronger than ever; and incurably diseased portions of the body, which, if retained in it, would have eaten as does a canker, and diffused languor and weakness through the whole body, are by the same wise spiritual surgery amputated; so that, under the influence of truthful love, Christians “grow up to him in all things who is the head;” and “the whole body being joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in every part, maketh increase to the edifying of itself in love.” The brethren live in peace, and the God of peace manifests his gracious presence in the midst of them. “The churches rest, and are edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, are multiplied.” The church becomes pure, and united, and strong, and beautiful in her holy union; and, free from internal quarrels and divisions, prosecutes with ardour and success her holy warfare with the

enemies of her Lord and King, while angels look on with delight, and devils with terror. “Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard; that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore.”¹

This would be the effect were there fervent charity enough among the brethren to cover all sins. Love can do this—ay! love should do this. Nothing but love can do it; no knowledge, no faith, no power of intellect, no energy of exertion, no labours, no sufferings, can effect this without love. Is it wonderful, then, when love can cover a multitude of sins, all sins, and when nothing else can do so, and when by doing so such evils would be avoided, and such glorious results secured, that the Apostle should use such urgency of persuasion, and call on Christians “above all things to have fervent charity,” or to have charity fervent, “among themselves?” So much for the illustration of the Apostle’s injunction and recommendation of the *maintenance* of brotherly love.

I shut up this part of the discourse by quoting a few passages of Scripture, in which the cultivation of brotherly, Christian love is pressed on Christians, praying that the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of love, would write them on our hearts, and put them in our inward parts. “A new commandment,” says the Master, “a new commandment I have given unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. Be kindly affectioned one towards another in brotherly love. With all lowliness of mind,” says one of his holy Apostles, “forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The

¹ Psal. cxxxiii.

fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness"—that is, kindness—"meekness. Live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit. Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us. Put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." "Ye are taught by God to love one another." "The end of the commandment is charity." "Follow after love, patience, meekness." "Let brotherly love continue." "The wisdom that cometh from above," says another Apostle, "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." "Seeing ye have purified yourselves," says a third Apostle, "in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently. Be of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren." "He," says a fourth, who had a very large measure of the Spirit of his Master, "he that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in the darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. Whosoever loveth not his brother is not of God. We know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer. Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. This is his commandment, That we believe in his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. Beloved, let us love one an-

other : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God ; for God is love. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. If a man say, I love God, and hate his brother, he is a liar ; for he who loveth not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ? And this commandment have we of him, That he who loveth God love his neighbour also. This is the commandment which we have received from the beginning, that we should walk in it, that we should love one another.”¹

My beloved brethren, “if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” We have much cause to be thankful for that measure of the spirit of love which our Father has been pleased to shed on us as a congregation, through Christ Jesus, and for that peace which is springing out of it. Let us carefully guard against whatever may cool our love or break our harmony. Let us all seek to be kept near Christ, that we may be kept near each other ; and let us pray that our love to our Lord, to one another, to all the saints, to all men, “may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment,” and may become more and more effectual in producing personal and mutual edification, and in promoting the prosperity and extension of the kingdom which is not of this world, making us to be of one mind—his mind ; of one heart—his heart ; a mind all light, a heart all love.

II. THE MANIFESTATION OF BROTHERLY LOVE.

Let us now proceed to the consideration of the Apostle's injunction and recommendation of the manifestation of

¹ John xiii. 34, 35. Rom. xii. 10. Eph. iv. 3. Gal. v. 22, 25. Eph. iv. 30-32: v. 1, 2. Col. iii. 12. 1 Thess. iv. 9. 1 Tim. i. 5; vi. 11. Heb. xiii. 1. James iii. 17. 1 Pet. i. 22; iii. 8. 1 John ii. 9, 11; iii. 14-16, 23; iv. 7, 11, 20, 21. 2 John 5.

Christian brotherly love. The fervent love which they were to cherish among themselves was to be manifested in the performance to each other of kind offices as men, and in the promoting of each other's spiritual interests as Christians. They were to employ their worldly property in the first of these manifestations of brotherly love, and their spiritual gifts in the second; and the grand motive influencing them in both was to be that they were stewards, and should be good stewards of the manifold grace of God; and "that God in all things might be glorified through Jesus Christ." Let us attend, then, in succession to these two enjoined manifestations of Christian brotherly love, and to the powerful motives by which both are enforced. "Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ: to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

§ 1. *Christians are to manifest brotherly love, by employing their property for each other's good as men, as in ungrudging hospitality.*

We observe, then, in the first place, that Christians are to manifest the fervent love which they have among themselves, by employing their worldly property in performing to each other kind offices as men. Of these kind offices we have a specimen in the ungrudging hospitality which is here enjoined, "Use hospitality one to another without grudging."

The habit of inviting in considerable numbers to our houses and tables, neighbours, acquaintances, and friends, in rank equal or superior to ourselves, and giving them a sumptuous entertainment, is what in our times generally passes by the the name of hospitality. Where God's good

creatures are not abused, as they often are, as stimulants and gratifications to intemperate appetite, and when these entertainments are not so expensive or so frequent as to waste an undue proportion of our substance and time, and to interfere with the right discharge of the duties of family instruction and devotion, there is nothing wrong in them.

I believe we may go a little further and say, that in this case they are fitted to serve a good purpose in keeping up friendly intercourse among relations and friends; but they are put out of their place altogether, when they are considered as a substitute for the Christian duty of hospitality. It is plain that our Lord did not condemn such meetings, for we find him not unfrequently present at them; but he obviously looked on them as capable of being better managed, and turned to more useful purposes, than they commonly were among the Jews in his time. "When thou makest a dinner or a supper," said our Lord to one of the chief pharisees who had invited him to his table, "call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."¹

We are certainly not to consider our Lord's words as a prohibition of convivial intercourse among equals, the entertaining on proper occasions, in a suitable manner, our wealthy neighbours, friends, and relatives; but we are to understand that, in doing so, we are rather complying with an innocent and useful social usage than performing an important Christian duty; and that the proportion of our property devoted to feeding the poor, should very much exceed that expended in feasting the rich. What are termed hospitable entertainments are very generally mani-

¹ Luke xiv. 12-14.

festations of vanity and pride on the part of those who give them. In a very limited degree are they the real expression of even a very low form of benevolent regard to those to whom they are given. The expense at which they are made is not incurred from love to God, regard to his authority, or a wish to promote his glory. Reward from him is altogether out of the question ; and the applause, or, what is in some instances more relished still, the envy of others, and a similar banquet in return, are the appropriate and the wished-for recompense. It is deeply to be regretted that too many professors of Christianity are in this respect unduly conformed to the world, and lavish on these thankless and profitless entertainments sums which might so easily be turned to so much better account in relieving the wants, and adding to the comforts of the poor and destitute ; or in promoting the glory of God, and the highest interests of mankind, by diffusing “the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins.”

But the occasional entertainment of our acquaintances, whether poor or rich, however unobjectionably, and even usefully, conducted, is not the Christian duty which, under the name of hospitality, is here and in so many other passages of the New Testament recommended. Hospitality is kindness to strangers, to persons not generally resident in the same place with ourselves, to persons with whom we are not on habits of intimate acquaintanceship ; and this kindness is manifested by bringing them to our house, and furnishing them with suitable entertainment there.

We have this duty strikingly illustrated in the case of Abraham and of Lot, when they “entertained angels unawares.” Nothing can be more beautifully simple than the inspired narrative : “And Abraham sat in the door of his tent in Mamre, in the heat of the day ; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him : and, when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from

thy servant. Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do as thou hast said. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat." And when two of these illustrious strangers entered Sodom, "Lot, sitting in the gate, rose up to meet them; and bowed himself with his face toward the ground: and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your way. And when they said, Nay, but we will abide in the street all night, he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat."¹ This was ancient hospitality.

In the same spirit we find Jethro saying to his daughters, in reference to the stranger who had assisted them in watering their flocks, "And where is he? why is it that ye left the man? call him, that he may eat bread."²

An instance of this virtue, not less interesting, is to be found in the case of the aged "working man" of Gibeah: "Behold, there came an old man from his work out of the field at even. And when he had lifted up his eyes, he saw a wayfaring man in the street of the city: and the old man said, Whither goest thou? and whence comest thou? And he said unto him, We are passing from Bethlehem-Judah toward the side of Mount Ephraim; from thence am I: and

¹ Gen. xviii. 1-8; xix. 1-3.

² Exod. ii. 18-20.

I went to Bethlehem, but I am now going to the house of the Lord ; and there is no man that receiveth me into his house. Yet is there both straw and provender for our asses ; and there is bread and wine also for me, and thine handmaid, and for the young man with thy servant ; there is no want of any thing. And the old man said, Peace be with thee : howsoever, let all thy wants lie upon me ; only lodge not in the street. So he brought him into the house, and gave provender to the asses ; and they washed their feet, and did eat and drink.”¹

Kindness to strangers was not only included in the second great command, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” but was the subject of express legislation in the Mosaic code. “If a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself ; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt : I am the Lord thy God. The Levite, because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied,” at the feast made on the tithe of the increase being set apart, at the end of every third year, “that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the works of thine hand which thou doest.”²

In the New Testament, a disposition to entertain strangers is represented as a necessary qualification of a Christian bishop. He must be “given to hospitality,” “a lover of hospitality ;” and it is mentioned as one of the characteristics of “the widow indeed,” that she has “lodged strangers, and washed the saints’ feet.” And Christians generally are expected to be “given to hospitality,” and not to be “forgetful to entertain strangers.”³

Nor is the duty only enjoined in the New Testament ; it is also exemplified. When Lydia was baptized, “she besought

¹ Judges xix. 16-21.

² Exod. xxii. 21 ; xxiii. 9. Lev. xix. 33.

³ 1 Tim. iii. 2. Tit. i. 8. 1 Tim. v. 10. Rom. xii. 13.

Paul and his companions," strangers in Philippi, "saying, If ye have judged me faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there; and she constrained them." Mnason from Cyprus, "the old disciple," entertained Paul and his associates in Jerusalem. Gaius, at Corinth, was so remarkable for his hospitality, that Paul calls him his host and the host of the whole church; and Philemon refreshed the bowels of the saints, and prepared Paul a lodging.¹

There can be no doubt that Christians are bound to exercise kindness to strangers generally, though they should not belong to the Christian society. In every way in their power they ought to "do good to all men, as they have opportunity;" but it is quite plain that the injunction before us has an especial reference to the household of faith, "Use hospitality *among yourselves*." When Christians in the course of their ordinary business went from home, as the means for accommodating strangers were not at all so abundant as in modern times, their brethren in the countries or cities they visited were expected to minister to their wants and convenience. "I commend unto you Phebe, our sister," says the Apostle to the church at Rome, not only "that ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints," that is, admit her to fellowship with you in the ordinances of religion, but also "that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you; for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also;"² that is, be hospitable to her who has been hospitable to me and many others.

Christians driven from their homes by persecution, were those who had the strongest claims on the hospitality of their more favoured brethren; and next to, or it may be equal to their claim, was that of those who had devoted their lives to the service of Christ among the heathen. It is in reference to them that the Apostle John speaks to the beloved Gaius: "Beloved, thou doest faithfully," or thou actest the part of a

¹ Acts xvi. 14, 15; xxi. 16. Rom. xvi. 23. Philem. 7, 22.

² Rom. xvi. 1, 2.

believer, "whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church; whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth."¹

The abundant accommodation which the habits of modern times have secured for strangers sojourning for a season from home, and the extent to which movement from place to place now prevails, makes hospitality, in the same sense and in the same measure as in the primitive times, unnecessary, and indeed impracticable. But Christian morality in its spirit is for all countries and for all ages. It is like its Author, unchanged and unchangeable. It is a proof that love has waxed cold, when Christians are not disposed to pay kind attention to their brethren from other places, who have no claim on their attention but that they are "one with them in Christ."

The prevalence of such an inhospitable spirit is, in more ways than one, a proof that the purity of Christian communion in these last days has declined from its primitive standard; and it has often seemed to me a token that things are not as they should be among us, when Christians from foreign lands, agents of our Christianly benevolent institutions, prosecuting their objects, and office-bearers of the various Christian churches visiting our large cities on business connected with the maintenance and extension of the kingdom of Christ, in so many instances, at an expense they can often ill afford, have to take up their abodes, for a few days it may be, or a few weeks, in houses of public accommodation, instead of finding an Abraham, a Lot, a Jethro, an old man of Gibeah, a Lydia, a Gaius, or a Mnason, to entertain them; and have sometimes cause to complain, that but for meeting some of

3 John 5-8. * See note A.

the leading men in public, in the prosecution of their objects, they leave those cities as little acquainted with their Christian inhabitants as when they entered them.

Surely Christians should not be behind the Jews in respect to religious hospitality. At the great national Jewish festivals, hospitality was liberally practised so long as national identity existed. On these occasions, no inhabitant of Jerusalem considered his house his own. Every house swarmed with strangers, though even this unbounded hospitality could not find accommodation in the houses for all who stood in need of it, and a large proportion of visitors had to be content with such shelter as tents could afford.

The neglected Christian strangers are not the only, are not the principal, sufferers. In receiving *them* we might have "received angels unawares;" and we should not forget who it is who will one day say, "I was a stranger, and ye took *me* in. I was a stranger, and ye took *me* not in;" and who, when the questions shall be put, When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee not in? shall answer, "Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it to me: Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me."¹

Using hospitality is but one out of many ways in which brotherly kindness is to be manifested in employing worldly substance in performing offices of kindness to our fellow Christians. The Christian, according to his ability, must be "eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and a father to the afflicted poor." The Christian law of love confirms the benignant statutes of the Mosaic code: "If thy brother be waxen poor, and fallen in decay with thee, then thou shalt relieve him; yea, though he be a stranger, or a sojourner. Ye shall not rule over one another with rigour. If there be among you a poor man, one of thy brethren, thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: but thou shalt

¹ Matt. xxv. 35-46.

open thy hand wide unto him. Beware lest thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee : thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest to him. Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and thy needy, in thy land." "If a brother has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need," he must not "shut up his bowels of compassion from him ; he must not be contented with saying, Be ye clothed, be ye fed ; he must "love not in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth ;" he must "give him the things that are needful for the body ;" and though community of property is by no means required by the Christian law, though there is no sufficient reason for thinking that it prevailed as a matter of necessity or obligation, even in the primitive times ; yet where the spirit of primitive Christianity prevails, wherever "the disciples are of one mind and of one heart," they will, in effect, have all things common, doing good to one another, and to all men as they have opportunity, and valuing worldly property chiefly as affording the means of glorifying God, and promoting the happiness of our fellow-men, and, still more, our fellow Christians.

The particular form and measure of hospitality, and other kindred offices of kindness, must depend on circumstances. It must be as God has prospered us, and as we have opportunity. It is well observed by Leighton, that "the great straitening of hands in these things is more from the straitness of hearts than of means. A large heart with a little estate will do much with cheerfulness and little noise ; while hearts glued to the poor riches they possess, or rather are possessed by, can scarce part with any thing till they be pulled from all."

In whatever measure these deeds of kindness are done, it is essential that they all possess the quality which the Apostle requires in hospitality, that they be "without grudging." "All things" of this kind are to be done "without mur-

murings.” “Every man, according as he hath purposed in his heart, so let him give,” so let him act; “for God loveth a cheerful giver,”¹ a cheerful doer. Good offices reluctantly rendered lose more than half their value. It is only when they really embody love that they are acceptable to God; and it is only in the degree in which they appear to embody love, that they are gratifying to their objects. So much for the first way in which Christians are to manifest brotherly love, by employing their worldly property in performing offices of kindness to one another as men.

§ 2. *Christians are to manifest brotherly love, by employing their spiritual gifts for promoting one another's spiritual edification.*

The second way in which they are to manifest their brotherly love, is to employ their spiritual gifts for promoting one another's spiritual interests as Christians: “As every man hath received the gift, even so let them minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.”

The word “gift”² here, and generally in the Apostolic Epistles, signifies any endowment, it may be natural, or it may be miraculous, influenced and guided by the Holy Spirit. “The grace of God”³ is the same as “the gift,” only it is descriptive of the aggregate of the gifts, and the endowment and the influence are viewed in the last case as given by God, in the first as enjoyed by man. This grace is termed “manifold,”⁴ to mark the varied forms which the Divine gifts, all of them expressive of grace, kindness, take in different individuals. Speaking of the supernatural spiritual gifts, the Apostle says what is true of all spiritual gifts, “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administration, but the same Lord;

¹ 2 Cor. ix. 7.

² Χάρισμα.

³ Χάριτος Θεου.

⁴ Ποικίλης.

and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that worketh all in all; and the ministration of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”¹

The church is viewed as a household, to the various members of which the Divine Master of the family has given various qualifications, by the exercise of which they are mutually to promote one another's improvement and happiness; and thus the improvement and happiness of the whole family is to be secured. These gifts, then, are not to be considered as conferred only or chiefly for the advantage of the individual of whom they are bestowed. They are intended for the good of the whole; and the gifted person is, in the exercise of his gift, not to act as an independent proprietor, seeking his own advantage, and doing what he wills with his own, but as a good steward, turning to the best account, according to the declared will of the Great Householder, a portion of HIS property, which the individual entrusted with is expected to use, not only for his own good, but for the good of all his brethren.

The meaning of the passage in our version is, I apprehend, somewhat obscured by an attempt to illustrate it. You will observe, that the words, “Let him speak,” and “let him do it,” are in the *Italic* character, indicating, as you are aware, that there are no corresponding words in the original; but that they are, in the estimation of the translators, necessary to bring out the sense in English; and if the tenth and eleventh verses are two distinct sentences, as they obviously supposed, some such supplement is necessary to bring any sense out of the first part of the latter of the verses; though to bring distinctly out the meaning our translators supposed to be in them, would have required a still larger supplement than they have inserted. ‘If any man speak the oracles of God, let him speak them *as* the oracles of God. If any man act the part of a minister or deacon, let him act the part of a minister, *as* of the ability

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 4-6.

which God giveth.' These are good advices, and it was only by attending to them that the gifted speakers or ministers could exercise the gift bestowed on them to the advantage of their brethren, and be good stewards of that portion of the manifold grace of God committed to their care.

I apprehend, however, that the two verses are not two sentences, but one, and that no supplement is necessary to bring out the full sense of the Apostle. The words in the beginning of the eleventh verse are just an illustration, by examples, of the statement in the beginning of the tenth verse. "Speaking as the oracles of God," "ministering as of the ability which God has given," are just two of "the gifts" bestowed on individuals for the use of the church, two varieties of the "manifold grace of God," which the recipients were to employ "as good stewards." The words may be literally rendered, "According as every man has received the gift, let them minister the same to each other, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; whosoever speaks as the oracles of God, whosoever ministers as of the ability which God hath given him." One man has received the gift of speaking as the oracles of God, the faculty of being useful in teaching and exhorting; he is an inspired teacher. Another has received the gift of ministry, the faculty of being useful in the management of the affairs of the spiritual society, in preserving order, collecting and managing its funds for supporting and extending the ordinances of Christianity, and for relieving the sick, the infirm, and the poor. Whatever faculty any Christian possesses of this kind, or of any other kind, is a gift received from Christ, for the purpose of edifying his body the church, is a portion of his "manifold grace" intrusted to the individual, to be managed faithfully and wisely for the purpose for which it is bestowed.

The passage before us receives illustration from some other passages in the apostolic epistles, which, though not in every respect parallel, obviously relate to the same subject. The first of these passages is to be found in the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans: "I say, through the grace

given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think ; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office ; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having, indeed, gifts, differing according to the grace given unto us ;” as in the passage before us, “ having gifts according to the manifold grace of God ;” and the gifts spoken of in this passage seem to be precisely the same as those specified in our text, “ whether prophecy or ministry.”¹ The gift of prophecy seems to be the same thing as the gift enabling a man to “ speak as the oracles of God,” the gift which fitted for teaching. The gift of “ ministry,” mentioned in both cases, is the gift, the qualification, or class of qualifications, which fit for administration ; the first gift being to be exercised in “ teaching and exhortation ;” the second in “ giving, in ruling or presiding, and in showing mercy.”

The second passage I refer to as fitted to throw light on our text, is in the 1st Epistle of the same Apostle to the Corinthians. “ Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God who worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal,” that is, to employ for the benefit of his brethren, to use as a steward of the manifold grace of God. “ For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom ; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit ; to another faith by the same Spirit ; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit ; to another the working of miracles ; to another prophecy ; to another discerning of spirits ; to another divers kinds of tongues ; to another the interpretation of

¹ Rom. xii. 3-8.

tongues : But all these worketh the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.”¹ The same general division of gifts fitting for teaching, and gifts fitting for administration, may be noticed here. To the first class belong “the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, prophecy, divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues :” to the second, the gifts of “healing and the discerning of spirits ;” while the gifts of working miracles, and faith, which seems to mean supernatural confidence and boldness, were gifts which might be usefully employed both in teaching and in administration. That the design of those various gifts was the mutual edification of Christians, and the general advantage of the church, is distinctly stated in what follows : “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body ; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body ; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body ; is it therefore not of the body ? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body ; is it therefore not of the body ? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing ? if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling ? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body ? And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee ; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. God hath tempered the body together, that there should be no schism in the body ; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular ;” that is, every one individually a member of that body.²

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 1-11.² 1 Cor. xii. 12-27.

The third passage peculiarly fitted to illustrate the text, is in the Epistle to the Ephesians. The Apostle having exhorted the believers to endeavour to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,”—that is, just to have fervent charity among themselves, so that the multitude of sins might be covered,—goes on to state the manner in which they, being one body, were connected by having severally diverse gifts fitted and intended for the advantage of the body. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors; and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love.”¹

Viewed in the light of these passages, there is no difficulty in perceiving what are the great principles which our text involves. They are these: that God by Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, communicates to his church, in manifestation of his sovereign, undeserved, distinguishing favour, those gifts that are necessary to its prosperity as a society, and to the improvement and happiness of its indi-

¹ Eph. iv. 3-16.

vidual members ; that this is not done by giving to every member the same gifts, far less an equal measure of the same gifts ; that the gifts are manifold or various, suited to serve different purposes, and communicated, too, in diversified measure to different individuals ; that these gifts are all communicated for the purpose of being exercised ; that the design of these exercises is not only, or so much, the advantage of the gifted individual as that of the body at large ; and, finally, that in the exercise of his gift every person ought to consider himself as a steward who must be faithful, managing the property of another for the specific purposes for which he has been entrusted with it.

He who neglects the gift that is in him, is an unprofitable servant. He who converts it to selfish objects, to the gratification of his own private tastes, for the purpose of interest or ambition, instead of the purpose of the edification of his brethren, is an unfaithful servant. He who, instead of cultivating and exercising his own gift, attempts to exercise a gift he has not received, and in this way to occupy a field which he is not fitted, and others are fitted, to occupy, is an unwise servant.

These observations are applicable to spiritual gifts, according to the definition already given of them, whether supernatural or not, and whether connected with official station in the church or not. The reference in the text, as well as in the parallel passages, seems to be to gifts, probably supernatural, connected with the two offices of teaching and ministry, of which all the offices in the primitive church seem to be represented as varieties ; and the command is, of course, to be viewed as addressed primarily to those Christians who occupy official situations in the church. The man who, in consequence of a gift conferred on him, and a call addressed to him, “ speaks as the oracles of God,” officially teaches the doctrines and laws of Christ Jesus, that man is to exercise his gift and perform the duties of his office, not in the way most fitted to gratify his own particular taste, or promote his own reputation for learning, inge-

nuity, and eloquence, but in the way most fitted for promoting the increase of the church in knowledge and faith, and holiness and comfort; and, if he has a peculiar gift, he is bound especially to cultivate and exercise that gift, whether it be for exposition or exhortation, for the establishment of truth or the exposure of error, for warning the unruly or comforting the afflicted. On the other hand, he who, in consequence of a gift conferred on him, and a call addressed to him, “ministers of the ability that God has given,” in presiding, superintending, administering the laws of Christ’s church, managing the charities of the church, performing all the offices indicated by the terms ruling, giving, showing mercy, ought to exercise his gift and perform the duties of his office, not to secure personal influence, to gratify personal vanity, or to promote personal interest, but to advance the great interests of the church as a spiritual body, and of the individuals constituting its members.

But the *principle* in the text reaches beyond the limits of official station; it is applicable to every individual member of the church. Every member has a gift; and that gift, whatever it be, is to be exercised not only for his own advantage, but for that of his brethren, as God gives him opportunity. Every Christian is to look not only at his own things, but at the things of others. Christians are to work out each other’s salvation, as well as each man his own. Indeed there is reason to think that that is the reference of the passage in the Epistle to the Philippians, now alluded to. Brother is to teach brother. They are to exhort one another daily; they are to bear one another’s burdens; they are to look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God. In the use of the gifts of the private members of a church, wisdom is necessary, as well as profitable, to direct; but without at all interfering with the peculiar duties, or intruding into the peculiar province of official teaching and rule, there is abundant room for the exercise of the gift of each, for the common benefit of all; and there is, questionless, something wanting, something wrong, in all ecclesiastical constitutions, which do

not provide for the regular employment of the gifts of individuals, for the common good of all the members of the body of Christ. "I desire none," says the devout prelate so often referred to, "to leap over the bounds of their calling, or rules of Christian prudence in their converse; yea, this were much to be blamed; but I fear, lest unwary hands, throwing on water to quench that evil, have let some of it fall by upon those sparks that should rather have been stirred and blown up."

§ 3.—*Motives to these two manifestations of Christian love.*

Enough has been said in illustration of the duty of the manifestation of Christian love, in the two forms prescribed in the passage before us. Let us say a word or two on the **MOTIVES** by which the duty is enforced.

There is a motive, and a powerful one, implied in the words "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Neither the temporal goods nor the spiritual gifts of Christians are their own property. Both have been given them, and given not to serve selfish but public ends. They were talents to be traded with, not so much to enrich the individual as to enlarge and improve the Master's property. If they neglect to use them for this purpose, they are unprofitable servants, they waste their Lord's money. An active, wise, faithful, use of these gifts, is necessary, to their being good stewards. Official Christians, and all Christians, should often remember that they must give an account of their stewardship, for they must not always be stewards; and if they do not attend to the command in the text, the account cannot be given in with joy, but with grief, which will be unprofitable to them. Whereas, if they do apply their gift, however limited, honestly to its appropriate purpose, their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. The cordial welcome and its joyful results shall be theirs: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." "Thinkest thou," says Archbishop Leighton, "that thy wealth, or power, or wit, is thine, to do with as thou wilt,

to engross to thyself either to retain as useless or to use, to hoard and wrap up, or to lavish out; according as thy humour leads thee. No! All is given as to a steward, wisely and faithfully to lay up and lay out, not only the outward estate and common gifts of mind, but even saving grace, which seems most appropriated for thy private good, yet is not wholly for that. Even thy graces are for the good of thy brethren?"

The great motive, however, urged by the Apostle for manifesting Christian love is, "that in all things God may be glorified through Christ Jesus." In the Christian economy "all things are of God," and all things are "by Christ Jesus." The Christian Church is the new creation; the work of the word and Spirit of God, as was the first creation. Every true member of it is created anew in Christ Jesus; and still more emphatically than of the holy nation, which was its type, may it be said, "This people has he formed for himself." They ought then to show forth his praise. When Christians manifest their love to one another in the way enjoined in the text, both the individual improvement of the members and the general spiritual prosperity of the church as a body, are promoted. Holiness and happiness are diffused. The wisdom, the power, the holiness, and the benignity of God, in the glorious economy of grace, of which the spiritual society, "the church," is an important element, are illustriously displayed. His authority is visibly acknowledged, his object is visibly gained, when Christians live together in holy love. On the other hand, when Christian love is not maintained and manifested, God is dishonoured. A false view is given respecting his character; and his holy name is blasphemed among the unbelievers, through the unworthy conduct of those calling themselves his people. The taunt is a bitter one, when Christians act a part unworthy their character, 'See how these Christians bite and devour one another. These are the lights of the world. These are the salt of the earth. This is Christianity, and these are Christians.'

A regard to the glory of God, especially as manifested through the mediation of Christ, is the master principle of every true Christian; and it is his prevailing desire that whether he eat, or drink, or whatsoever he do, he may do all to the glory of God. No motive, then, can be conceived better adapted than this to induce Christians carefully to cultivate, habitually to manifest brotherly love; without this God cannot be glorified, nay, he must be dishonoured by them; and just in the degree in which they attend to these duties, do they answer the design of their high and holy vocation; the “showing forth the praises of him who hath called them from darkness to life;” the being “to the praise of the glory of him who hath made them accepted in the beloved,” whose they are, whom they are bound to serve; of whom, and “through whom, and to whom are all things.”

The Apostle concludes his exhortation and enforcement of the maintenance and manifestation of brotherly love, by a solemn doxology: “To whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever.” If we look merely at the words, it may be doubted whether this ascription of Divine honours has a reference to God the Father, or to Jesus Christ. There can be no doubt, that there are similar ascriptions of Divine honours to our Lord Jesus in other parts of the New Testament; and that, as He and the Father are one, it is most meet “that all should honour the Son as they honour the Father.” At the same time, though Jesus Christ be the nearest antecedent, God the Father is the subject of the preceding statement; and an ascription of Divine praise and dominion to HIM seems most naturally to rise out of that statement. It is as if the Apostle had said—Seek, by the maintenance and manifestation of brotherly love, to glorify God; for he is worthy of all glory. Praise and dominion are his proper due.

“It is,” says Leighton, “most reasonable, his due as God the Author of all, not only of all supervenient good, but even of being itself; seeing that all is from him, that all be for

him. ‘For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever.’ As it is most just, so it is most sweet to aim at this, that God be glorified. It is the alone worthy design that fills the heart with heavenliness, and with a heavenly calmness; and sets it above the clouds and storms of those passions that disquiet low, self-seeking minds. He is a miserable unsettled wretch who cleaves to himself and forgets God; is perplexed about his credit, and gain, and base ends, which are often broke; and which when he attains, yet they and he must perish together. When his estate, or designs, or any comforts fail, how can he look to him whom he looked so little at before? May not the Lord say, ‘Go to the gods whom thou hast served, and let them deliver and comfort thee?’ Seek comfort from thyself, as thou didst all for thyself. But he that hath resigned himself, and is all for God, may confidently say, ‘The Lord is my portion.’ This is the Christian’s aim, to have nothing in himself, nor in any thing but in this tenure; all for the glory of my God, my estate, family, abilities, my whole self, all I have and am. And as the love of God grows in the heart this purpose grows; the higher the flame rises the purer it is; the eye is daily more upon it; it is oftener in the mind in all actions than before. In common things, the very works of our callings, our very refreshments, to eat, and drink, and sleep, are all for this end, and with a particular aim at it as much as may be. Even the thought of it is often renewed throughout the day, and at times generally applied to all our ways and employments. It is that elixir which turns all into gold; thy ordinary works into sacrifices, ‘with which God is well-pleased.’ ”

The introduction of this doxology in the midst of his exhortation is a beautiful exemplification of the Apostle’s piety. We have not a few instances of the same kind in the epistolary writings of his “beloved brother Paul.” It were a pleasing proof that we had obtained like precious faith with the Apostles, and been baptized into the Spirit, which was shed forth on them so abundantly, were there in

our hearts a fountain of affectionate esteem, grateful admiration, adoring awe of the Divine holiness, benignity, and majesty, always ready to gush forth in a stream of praise; “a well of living water, springing up to eternal life.” It were indeed, as the devout Archbishop says, “a high and blessed condition to be in all estates in some willing readiness to bear a part in this song, to acknowledge the greatness and goodness of our God, and to wish him glory in all. What are the angels doing? This is their business, without interruption, without weariness, without end. And, seeing we hope to partake with them, we should even now, though in a lower key, and not so tunably neither, yet as we may, begin it; and upon all occasions our hearts should often be following in this sweet note or offering, ‘To Him be glory and dominion for ever.’”

NOTE A.

“The care of providing for the support and maintenance of strangers, of the poor, the sick, the old, of widows and orphans, and of those in prison on account of their faith, devolved on the whole church. This was one of the main purposes for which the collection of voluntary contributions, in the assemblies convened for public worship, was instituted; and the charity of individuals, moreover, led them to emulate each other in the same good work. In particular, it was considered as belonging to the office of the Christian matron to provide for the poor, for the brethren languishing in prison, and to show hospitality to strangers. The hindrance occasioned to this kind of Christian activity, is reckoned by Tertullian among the disadvantages of a mixed marriage. ‘What heathen,’ says he, ‘will suffer his wife to go about from one street to another, to the houses of strangers, to the meanest hovels indeed, for the purpose of visiting the brethren? What heathen will allow her to steal away into the dungeon to kiss the chain of the martyr? If a brother arrive from abroad, what reception will he meet in the house of *the stranger*? If an alms is to be bestowed, storehouse and cellar are shut fast.’ On the other hand, he counts it among the felicities of a marriage contracted between Christians, that the wife is at liberty to visit the sick and relieve the needy, and is never straitened or perplexed in the bestowment of her charities. Nor did the active brotherly love of each community confine itself to what transpired in its own immediate circle, but extended itself also to the wants of the Christian communities in distant lands. On urgent occasions of this kind, the bishops made arrangements for special collections. They appointed fasts; so that what was saved, even by the poorest of the flock, from their daily food, might help to supply the common wants.”—TERTULL. *ad uxorem*, ii. 1, 8; *de jejuniis*, c. xii.—NEANDER. *Gen. Hist.* vol. i. p. 347, 8.

DISCOURSE XX.

DIRECTORY TO CHRISTIANS SUFFERING FOR THEIR RELIGION.

1 PET. iv. 12-19.—Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye: for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

FROM many passages in this Epistle, it is obvious that they to whom it was addressed were in adverse circumstances. They had already been exposed to suffering in a variety of forms, in consequence of their profession of the faith of Christ. "They were in heaviness, through manifold temptations;" and it is more than once not obscurely intimated, that the trials in which they had been involved were but the forerunners of more severe persecutions, to which, ere long, they might expect to be subjected. It was with them a dark and cloudy day, and their sky did not appear to be clearing. The evils they had experienced seemed to be but

the prelude drops of an approaching tempest. The paragraph which is to form the subject of our discourse at this time, contains an inspired directory for those persecuted Christians, amid the increasing difficulties of their situation. The injunctions contained in this inspired directory seem all reducible to the four following: 'Be not astonished at your sufferings;' 'Be not depressed by your sufferings;' 'Be not ashamed of your sufferings;' and, 'persevering in well-doing, commit the keeping of your souls to God, under your sufferings.' Let us shortly attend to these four injunctions in their order, as explained and enforced by the Apostle.

I.—BE NOT ASTONISHED AT YOUR SUFFERINGS.

The first direction given by the Apostle to his suffering brethren is, 'Be not astonished at your sufferings.' "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing had happened to you."

The course of suffering on which these Christians had entered, is figuratively described as a fire or burning, intended to try them. The allusion is to the intense heat of the furnace of the refiner, by which he tests the genuineness, and increases the purity, of the precious metals. The figurative representation is obviously designed to indicate, at once the great severity and the important purposes of the afflictions on which these Christians might reckon with certainty as awaiting them.

These afflictions were to be severe. They are compared, not to the heat of the sun, or of an ordinary fire, but to the concentrated heat of the refiner's furnace; and we know, from authentic history respecting the persecutions to which the primitive Christians were exposed, that this figure does not at all outrun the reality. Calumnious misrepresentation and spoiling of goods, stripes and imprisonments, weariness and painfulness, hunger and thirst, watchings and fastings, cold and nakedness, were to them common trials.

The Apostle's description of the Maccabean martyrs is equally applicable to the primitive Christians. "Some of them were tortured" in every form which malignant ingenuity could devise, "others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, and tormented: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and in caves of the earth."¹ Well did such sufferings deserve to be termed, the burning, "the fiery trial."

The figure is equally significant if we consider it as referring to the design of these sufferings. In this respect, too, they resembled the fire of the refiner's furnace. The design of its intense heat is to test and to purify the precious metals subjected to it. The design of their sufferings is to test the genuineness of profession and the power of principle; and, by separating the precious from the vile, to improve the character, both of the Christian society and of the Christian individuals of which it is composed.

It was not at all unnatural that the primitive Christians, when exposed to such sufferings, should not only feel them to be very painful, but reckon them to be very wonderful; that they should think 'it strange concerning the burning among them, as if some strange thing had happened to them.' Were not they "the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus;" the "sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty?"² Did he not love them? Could he not protect them? Had he not wisdom enough to confound all the plans, power enough to restrain and frustrate all the efforts, of their enemies? Had he not promised to preserve them from all evil, and to bestow on them every blessing? Was it not strange, in these circumstances, that they should be exposed to suffering at all? doubly strange that they should be exposed to suffering for avowing the relation

¹ Heb. xi. 36-38.

² Gal. iii. 26. 2 Cor. vi. 18.

and performing their duty to him? strangest of all, that they should be exposed to *such* suffering when following such a course?

And if these sufferings seemed strange as coming from God, they must also have appeared strange as coming from men. They were no disturbers of the public peace, no invaders of private rights. They were "blameless and harmless, the children of God without rebuke;"¹ rendering to all their due, nay, doing good to all as they had opportunity. Was it not strange that they should be the objects of the contempt and dislike of their fellow citizens, and be treated by their rulers as if they had been egregious malefactors?

Yet, notwithstanding all this, there was abundant reason why the primitive Christians should not think their persecutions strange, however severe. No strange thing, indeed, happened to them. The spirit of Christianity is so directly opposed to the spirit of the world, that the wonder is, not that there has been so much persecution, but that there has not been more. But for the restraints of God's providence on the world, and on him who is its prince and god, Christianity and Christians had long ago been exterminated. "If they were of the world, the world would love its own; but because they were not of the world, even as HE who called them was not of the world, therefore the world hated them as it hated him."² Without an entire change in the spiritual character of the world, it could not have been otherwise. It would have been strange indeed if it had not hated them. No! "It is not strange that the malignant world should hate holiness, hate the light, hate the very shadow of it: the more the children of God walk like their Father and their home, the more unlike must they of necessity become to the world about them, and therefore become the very marks of their enmities and malice." "There is in the life of a Christian a convincing light, that shows the depravity of the waters of darkness, and a piercing heat that scorches

¹ Phil. ii. 15.

² John xv. 18.

the ungodly, which stirs and troubles their consciences. This they cannot endure, and hence rises in them a contrary fire of wicked hatred; and hence the trials, the fiery trials, of the godly.”¹

Nor is this the only reason why Christians should not account sufferings for the cause of Christ, however severe, “strange.” They are not only natural, so far as a wicked world is concerned, but they are necessary for them. “It is needful,” as the Apostle observes above; “it is needful that ye for a season be in heaviness through manifold temptation.” Such seasons of persecution are necessary to the church as a body. During a period of comparative worldly prosperity, multitudes of worldly men find their way into the communion of the church; and, just in the degree in which they have influence in it, unfit it for its great purposes both to those within its pale and those without it. A period of uninterrupted external prosperity, if it were not attended with such an effusion of Divine influence as the world has never yet witnessed, would soon lead to such secularization of the church as would destroy the distinction of the church from the world; not by converting the world, but by perverting the church; not by making the world christian, but by making the church worldly. It is needful that the great husbandman take the fan in his hand, that he may purge his floor, driving off the chaff and bringing close together the good grain. “When tribulation for the word’s sake arise, those who have no root in themselves are offended,” stumbled; they “go away, and walk no more with Jesus” and his persecuted followers, and it is a good riddance; while, on the other hand, tribulation with those who “have root in themselves,” “works patience,” endurance. It produces not apostasy, but perseverance.² For, as persecution purifies the church, so it improves her true members. They are called by it to a more vigorous exercise of all the principles of the new life; and it is a general law, exercise

¹ Leighton.

² Matt. xlii. 6, 21. Rom. v. 3—*ὑπομονή*.

invigorates. It is at once an indication of health, and a means of invigorating it. The Christian in the day of trial quits himself like a man, and becomes strong. His faith, his hope, his patience, his zeal, his humility, are increased exceedingly. "The trial of faith," by these afflictions, "is more precious than the trial of gold." Gold can never be so purified as to become incorruptible; but faith, strengthened by trial, becomes invincible, and will "be found to praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Suffering for Christ, in some form and degree or other, seems to be essential to the formation of the Christian character; and that character has, usually, reached nearest to perfection in those who have had the largest share of that kind of trial.

Another reason why Christians should not think "the fiery trial" a strange thing is, that their Lord met with severe sufferings, "the contradiction of sinners against himself," and that all their brethren who had gone before them have also been severely afflicted. Should they think it strange to be led to heaven in the same road by which He and they had travelled. "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you." Such afflictions, too, were fulfilled in their brethren who had been in the world. Are they better than the apostles, who were "as gazing-stocks to the world, to angels, and to men?"¹

There is yet another reason why Christians should never think persecution for Christ's sake, however severe, a strange thing. It is something they should be prepared for; for they have been very plainly taught that they may assuredly expect it in some form or other. "To this they have been called." "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "Marvel not that the world should hate you." "If any man will be my disciple, let him renounce himself, forsake all, take up his cross, and follow me." "All who will live godly,

¹ John xv. 20. 1 Cor. iv. 9.

must," says the Apostle, "suffer persecution." "Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom."¹

Christians, then, in no age of the church and the world, should count sufferings for the cause of Christ a strange thing. The primitive Christians were especially warned by our Lord, that the season which had arrived when Peter wrote this epistle, the period immediately preceding the destruction of Jerusalem, was to be to his followers a period of peculiarly severe trial. It is in reference to the sufferings of these times he says, "See that ye be not troubled. All these things must come to pass. Lo, I have told you before." The exhortation of Peter is very nearly parallel with that of his brother Paul, in an epistle written about the same time: "Let no man be moved by these afflictions, for yourselves know that ye are appointed thereunto."

II. BE NOT DEPRESSED BY YOUR SUFFERINGS.

The second direction given by the Apostle to his brethren is, 'Be not depressed by your sufferings.' "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of the sufferings of Christ; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of (blasphemed), but on your part he is glorified."

In these words the Apostle first calls on them generally not to be depressed by their sufferings for Christ, but, on the contrary, to rejoice in them, giving very good reasons for his injunction, reasons applicable to all sufferings, of whatever kind, for the cause of Christ; and he then calls on them not to be depressed by a particular form of suffering, that of reproach, which is very much fitted to have this effect; and enforces this exhortation by a very powerful and appropriate motive.

¹ John xvi. 33. Matt. xvi. 24. Mark viii. 34. Luke ix. 23. 2 Tim. iii. 12. Acts xiv. 22.

The Apostle calls on Christians not to be depressed by, but to rejoice in, their sufferings for Christ, whatever form they might wear; whether loss of property, reputation, liberty, or life, for two reasons :—First, because, in enduring these sufferings, they are partakers of Christ's sufferings; and secondly, because their fellowship with Christ in his sufferings is, by the Divine appointment, connected with fellowship with him in his enjoyments at the revelation of his glory.

1. Christians in suffering for Christ are “partakers of the sufferings of Christ.” In all these afflictions Christians may be viewed as having fellowship with Christ. When they suffer they are treading in his steps, who was, by way of eminence, a sufferer;—the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and it is the communication of his Spirit which enables them to bear them in the same temper in which he bore his. But there is a peculiar propriety in representing them, when suffering for their attachment to him, as being partakers of his sufferings. The sufferings they then endured are endured in the same cause in which his sufferings were endured: the cause of truth and righteousness, the cause of God's glory and man's happiness. They are inflicted on them just because they are like him; and they who persecute them would, had they it in their power, persecute him as they persecute them. They stand in his place; they are his representatives. They are “in the world as he was in the world;” and are therefore treated by the world as he was treated by the world. “Therefore the world knoweth not,” acknowledgeth not in their true character “them, because it knew not,” acknowledged not “him” in his true character. They are so identified with him, that he considers what is done to them as done to Him. “He that touches them touches the apple of his eye.” “Saul, Saul,” said he from the opened heavens, “why persecutest thou ME?” “Inasmuch, as ye did it not to one of the least of them,” shall he say at last from the throne of universal judgment to those who cruelly neglected his suffering people,

“ye did it not to ME. Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these, ye did it to ME.”

Every true Christian, suffering in the cause of Christ, may say with the Apostle Paul, “I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh.”¹ We are not to suppose that our Lord left any sufferings to be endured by Paul, or any one else, as the expiation of the sins or the ransom of the souls of his people. These great objects were fully secured by his sufferings “in his own body,” “the body of his flesh by death.” On the cross, in reference to them, he said, “It is finished.” These sufferings were his personal burden. We partake of them, not in the way of supplementing them by our sufferings, but by becoming sharers of their precious fruits. They are accounted to us as if they had been ours; and we are acquitted, and justified, and saved by them, as a full satisfaction to the demands of the law on us as sinners. The endurance of these expiatory sufferings is something absolutely peculiar to him. We have, we can have, no part nor lot in that matter. The meaning of the Apostle plainly is, ‘I am so closely connected with Christ, that he regards those sufferings endured by me in his cause, as his sufferings in my body. I know there is a certain measure of such sufferings allotted to me, as to every other Christian. I have undergone already a part of those sufferings; and in the sufferings which I now undergo for the sake of you Thessalonians, a part of his body, I rejoice to think that I am filling up what remains of the sufferings appointed me, and which I delight in thinking of as the sufferings of Christ in my body.’ “The filling up spoken of by the Apostle is not the supplementing Christ’s personal sufferings, but it is the completing that share allotted to himself as one of the members of Christ—as sufferings which, from the intimacy of union between the head and the members, may be called *his* sufferings. Christ lived in Paul, spoke in Paul, wrought

¹ Col. i. 24.

in Paul, suffered in Paul; and in a similar sense the sufferings of every Christian for Christ are the sufferings of Christ."

This is a view of suffering for Christ well fitted to prevent depression and to produce holy joy. "It seems obviously fit," as Leighton says, "that we should follow where our Captain led. It is not becoming that he should lead through rugged, thorny ways, and we pass about to get away through flowery meadows. As his natural body shared with his head in suffering, so ought his mystical body with him who is their head."

And as it is fit, so it is pleasant. It is good, as well as becoming well. "It is a sweet, joyful thing, to be a sharer with Christ in any thing. All enjoyments wherein he is not are bitter to a soul who loves him, and all sufferings with him are sweet. The worst things of Christ are more truly delightful than the best things of the world; his afflictions sweeter than their pleasures, his reproaches more glorious than their honours, and more rich than their treasures. Love delights in likeness and communion; not only in things otherwise pleasant, but in the hardest and harshest things which have not in them any thing desirable, but only that likeness. So that this thought is very sweet to a heart possessed with this love. What does the world by its hatred and persecutions and revilings for Christ, but make me more like him, give me a greater share with him in that which he did so willingly undergo for me. When he was sought to be made king he escaped, says Bernhard, the last of the Fathers; but when he was sought for the cross, he freely yielded himself. And shall I shrink and creep back from what he calls me to suffer for his sake; yea, even all my other troubles and sufferings I will desire to have stamped thus with this conformity to the sufferings of Christ, in the humble, obedient, cheerful endurance of them, and the giving up my will to my Father's. The following of Christ makes any way pleasant; his faithful followers refuse no march after him, be it through deserts, and mountains, and storms, and hazards that would affright self-pleasing, easy spirits. Hearts kindled

and actuated by the Spirit of Christ, will follow him whithersoever he goeth.”¹

2. A second reason assigned by the Apostle, why persecuted Christians should not be depressed by, but rather rejoice in their sufferings is, that this fellowship with Christ in his sufferings is, by the Divine appointment, connected with fellowship with him in his enjoyment at the revelation of his glory. “Ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings ; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

The glory of Christ is the transcendent personal excellence, and official dignity and authority, which belong to the God-Man Mediator. Of that glory a partial manifestation is made in the word of the truth of the gospel, and in his administration of that universal empire which he possesses, as well as in his dispensations towards the church as a body, and towards its individual members, with whom he stands connected in a relation so intimate and peculiar. By those who by his Spirit are led to understand and believe the gospel, and by its light to contemplate the dispensations of his kingdoms of providence and grace, this glory is partially apprehended ; and, whenever it is so, it casts all other glory into the shade. That which had glory has now no glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth. The Word, who was made flesh, and dwelt among men, may be seen in his wondrous works as in a mirror ; and all who in them behold his glory, acknowledge that it is a glory worthy of the only-begotten of the Father, and that he is indeed full of grace and truth. And by the believing contemplation of this glory they themselves in their measure become glorious ; they are changed into its likeness, made glorious by that which is glorious, converted by glory into glory.²

It is, however, but a dim reflection of his glory that reaches this dark earth. His glory, like himself, is “hid with God.” The great body of men see it not at all, being destitute of the spiritual organs by which alone it can be discerned ; and

¹ Leighton.

² 2 Cor. iii. 18.

even they who see most of it, see at best “through a glass,” or by means of a mirror, “darkly;” “they know but in part, they understand but in part.”

But this glory is not always to continue so imperfectly manifested in our world to its inhabitants. Out of his heavenly sanctuary he is yet to shine forth gloriously. His “glorious appearance,” or the appearance of his glory, is “the blessed hope” of all who believe. At the close of the present order of things, he will come “in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father, and the glory of his holy angels.” He will come “in clouds, and every eye shall see him.” He will come “in flaming fire, to take vengeance on those who know him not, and who obey not his gospel; and to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.”¹ He will come to manifest the glories of his power, and wisdom, and righteousness, and grace, removing entirely and for ever the cloud of mystery which hangs over the Divine character and dispensation, and manifesting himself at once in all the glories of untarnished holiness and inflexible justice, and infinite, omnipotent, all-wise benignity, as the righteous Judge and the all-accomplished Saviour.

The revelation at once of the glories of his righteousness and grace, shall be a source of the highest satisfaction to all his redeemed ones; and then shall be fully compensated all the privations, and sacrifices, and sufferings to which they have submitted for his name’s sake. Then “shall they rejoice with exceeding joy.” “In this last time,” when the salvation to which in the present times they are kept by the power of God through faith, and in the revelation of which will be revealed the glory of Christ the Saviour, “they shall rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.”

And they will have good cause thus to rejoice; for when He who is their life appears, is manifested, they shall also appear, or be manifested in glory. His glorious appearing, and their manifestation as the sons of God, by their entering

¹ 2 Thess. i. 7-10.

on full possession of all the privileges of Divine sonship, shall be contemporaneous. He shall appear in glory, and they shall be "like him, seeing him as he is." "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, when he shall sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all nations," he will make those who have been partakers of his sufferings exceeding glad in the fellowship of his glory. Having re-united their glorified spirits to their once mortal but now immortal bodies, he shall place them at his right hand as his honoured friends, and shall say to them in the presence of the assembled universe of intelligent beings, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And then "they shall go into life eternal;"¹ and conquerors, more than conquerors, through his love, sit down with him on his throne, even as he, when he had overcome, sat down with his Father on his throne, and shall "reign in life" with him for ever and ever. Such are the blessings which await all the faithful at the coming of the Lord; and there is reason to conclude that the measure of the enjoyment and glory of individuals, will correspond to the measure of labour and sufferings submitted to in his cause.

This is a consideration well fitted not only to prevent depression of mind under suffering, however severe, but to fill the heart with holy triumph, and enable the Christian to glory in such tribulation as is connected with so glorious a hope, counting it indeed "all joy to be" for his cause "brought into manifold temptations." Well, as the pious Archbishop says, may Christians "rejoice in the midst of all their sufferings, standing upon the advanced ground of the covenant of grace, and by faith looking beyond this moment, and all that is in it, to that day wherein the crown of everlasting joy, that diadem of beauty, shall be put upon their head, and when sorrow and mourning shall fly away. Oh, that blessed hope! How soon will this pageant of the world, that men

¹ Matt. xxv. 31-46.

are gazing on, these pictures and fancies of pleasures and honours, falsely so called, vanish and give place to the real glory of the sons of God, where the blessed First-born among many brethren shall be seen appearing in full majesty, as the Only-begotten of the Father, and all his brethren with him, beholding and sharing his glory, having ‘come out of great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’” Believing that if we suffer with him it is that we may be glorified together with him, we cannot but “judge that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us;” so that we may well rejoice amid these sufferings, especially as we know that “these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” There is something more than mere sequence here. “We are partakers of his sufferings; that, when his glory is revealed, we may rejoice with exceeding joy.”

Having thus enforced the general exhortation not to be depressed by, but to rejoice in, sufferings for Christ, of whatever kind, the Apostle from a consideration of the nature of these sufferings, as sufferings in which they have fellowship with Christ, and of the design and certain issue of such sufferings, the bringing of them into the fellowship of the Saviour’s glory and joy, he calls their attention to a particular form of suffering, in its own nature peculiarly fitted to depress the mind, “reproach,” and shows that even it is a proper ground not of depression, but of exultation. “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth on you; on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.”

Reproach was one of the most common and most severe of the trials of the persecuted primitive Christians. And few things are more fitted to break the heart; as the psalmist in the person of the Messiah says, “Reproach has broke my heart; I am full of heaviness.” Their “names were cast out as evil.” They were “accounted as the filth of the world,

and the offscouring of all things ;” and they were thus reproached for being Christians, for bearing his name, and professing his religion ; for believing its doctrines, for cherishing its hopes, for observing its institutions, for obeying its laws. On this account they were represented as despisers of the gods, enemies of the commonwealth, haters of mankind, the accomplices or the dupes of an impostor, deceived or deceivers, dreaming enthusiasts or designing villains.

• Now, says the Apostle, be not discouraged by all this contumely. If you are really what these men call you, Christians, you are truly happy, and are possessed of a true inward honour and glory, of which all their malignant abuse can in no degree deprive you. “The Spirit of glory and of God resteth on you ;” that is, the Spirit of glory, *even* the Spirit of God, resteth on you, or, the Spirit of God resteth on you as the Spirit of glory.

There can be no doubt that the reference here is to the Holy Ghost, the Divine Author of our salvation, as it is an inward transformation. The appellation, “the Spirit of glory,” may be considered as equivalent to the glorious Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ ; as “the Lord of glory” means our glorious Lord Jesus Christ.¹ But it seems more probable that the Holy Spirit is here termed the Spirit of glory, to indicate that he is the author of true glory and honour. Unbelieving men reckoned the primitive Christians despicable and dishonourable, and called them so in their reproaches. But were they indeed so ? No, by no means. The Spirit of God, who is the fountain of true honour, rested on them, and by his influence formed them to a character which was the proper object, not of contempt, but of approbation and admiration to all good and wise intelligent beings.

It is as if the Apostle had said, ‘ You are really honourable, and your honour is not of a kind of which these reproaches can deprive you. They count you fools ; but the Spirit of wisdom and good understanding rests on you, and makes

¹ James ii. 1.

you wise unto salvation: he gives you a sound mind, and makes you of good understanding. They count you weak, and contemn you for your imbecility in the sight of the Lord; but he makes you "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might;" he is in you "the Spirit of power," as well as "of a sound mind." They reckon you mean, but he gives you true dignity and grandeur of character; he makes you great in the sight of the Lord, and decks you with ornaments becoming your dignity as kings and priests unto God, even your Father. Is not the consideration of what he has made you, more than sufficient to neutralize the painful effects of all that they can call you? If he has made you wise, what though they call you fools? If he has made you strong, what though they call you weak? If he has made you illustrious, what though they should represent you as despicable? His bearing witness with your spirits that ye are indeed the sons of God, "and if sons then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ Jesus," is surely more than enough to counterbalance all their false and malignant reproaches.' Such seems to be the import of the motive which the Apostle employs to induce Christians to rise above the disheartening influence of reproach for Christ, and even to rejoice in it. If you are Christians indeed, ye have a real abiding honour, springing from the Spirit of God, who is the Spirit of glory resting on you, dwelling in you, which their reproaches can in no degree affect.

The meaning and reference of the concluding words of the fourteenth verse, "On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified," are somewhat doubtful. They may mean, what from their rendering our translators obviously supposed they did mean, This Spirit of glory which exists in you is evil spoken of, or blasphemed, by those men who reproach you for the name of Christ, who load you with abuse because you are Christians. He made you what you are as Christians, and, in reproaching you, they indeed blaspheme him. They who mock at Christians, as Christians, play at a dangerous game. The time is coming when the

Son of God will say, "Inasmuch as ye did it to them, ye did it to me;" and the Spirit of God, 'In reproaching them ye blasphemed me, in ridiculing my work you poured contempt on my person.' Let the men of the world take care. What they think but a jest, may prove a very serious affair. The Jews thought they were putting to death a poor unfriended Nazarene. It turned out that they crucified the Lord of glory. The enemies of vital Christianity may think they are only running down a set of wrong-headed enthusiasts; it may turn out they are coming very near the sin "that hath no forgiveness, neither in this world nor in that which is to come." It is as if the Apostle had said, their reproaches are more against the Spirit that animates you than against you.

But while *they* blaspheme him, *you* glorify him; and surely it is very meet that it should be so. Christians should honour the Holy Spirit who makes them honourable. They should show forth his praises, giving visible form to his inward work, by proving themselves to be under his influence as "the Spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind." This is the best way of meeting the reproaches of men against ourselves as Christians, and against the Spirit by whom, as Christians, we are animated and guided. Let us show what manner of spirit we are of; that it is indeed the Spirit of glory that rests on us; a Spirit which is "pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated;" a Spirit which leads us to think on and to practise "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report."¹

While this is important truth, and while the words in themselves may be considered as well enough fitted to convey it, I am rather disposed to go along with those interpreters who consider the *verbs* here as used impersonally, and think the Apostle expresses this sentiment: On their part there is

¹ James iii. 17. Phil. iii. 8.

evil-speaking, blasphemy, reproach; but on your part there is glory, true honour. They reproach, indeed, but ye are not dishonoured. The Spirit of glory rests on you, and therefore all their reproaches cannot rob you of true honour, cannot make you really contemptible. You are what the Spirit of God has made you, not what they represent you. What a comfort is this to a calumniated Christian, and how well-fitted to enable him in patience to possess his soul, amid calumnious reproaches and cruel mockings!

There is a question which naturally enough is suggested by what has been said. Since we all, with scarcely an exception, profess the religion of Christ, have we ever been exposed to suffering on account of our religion? Is the fiery trial a strange thing to us? Have we never been partakers of the sufferings of Christ? never been exposed to the reproach of Christ? If we have not, I am afraid there is something wanting, something wrong. The world and Christianity are substantially the same things, they were in the primitive times; and, though the world may take other ways of showing its hatred and contempt of Christianity and Christians than it did then, that hatred and contempt still exist unmitigated, and will find a way to manifest themselves when they meet with their proper object. But it is not every thing that is called Christianity the world hates; it is the Christianity of the new Testament. It is not the name, it is the thing. There is much that is called Christianity which the world does not at all dislike: it is its own work. There are many called Christians who are of the world, and the world loves them. A wo is denounced on the Christian man, of whom all men speak well; and if we have in no way incurred the hatred of an ungodly world, we have reason to fear, that though we have the name we have not the thing. It is a faithful saying, "Every one who will live godly must suffer persecution." We are not to court persecution: if we are consistent Christians, we will not need to do so. It will come of its own accord. The world will be consistent in its hatred, if Christians are but consistent in their professions

and conduct. Let us take care that we do not sinfully shun it. Let us hold fast the faith and profession of the gospel, to whatever privations and sufferings this may expose us. Let us part with every thing rather than the Saviour and his truth, the testimony of a good conscience, and the hope, through grace, of rejoicing with exceeding joy at the appearing of his glory; let us show how highly we value him and his gospel, by the cheerfulness with which we submit to such trials as attachment to them may bring on us.

III. BE NOT ASHAMED OF YOUR SUFFERINGS.

The third direction given by the Apostle to his persecuted brethren is, Be not ashamed of your sufferings in the cause of Christ. “Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.”

The Apostle proceeds on the principle, that there are sufferings which are indeed disgraceful; that it is a possible thing that Christians may expose themselves to such sufferings, which in their case must be doubly disgraceful; that it is the duty of Christians carefully to guard against rendering themselves liable to such sufferings; that there are sufferings to which Christians may be exposed, merely because they are Christians, merely because they profess the faith, obey the laws, observe the institutions of Christ; and that such sufferings, however disgraceful in their own nature, and in the estimation of men, are no proper ground of shame to those who meet with them; but, on the contrary, should be subjects of gloriation and thanksgiving to God.

When suffering is just punishment it is always disgraceful. Crime in all its forms is a shameful thing, something base and unworthy; and so must punishment be, which proclaims the man a criminal, which at once publishes the fact that he has been guilty, and brands him with public reprobation on account of his guilt. It is shameful

to commit murder, and therefore it is shameful to suffer as a murderer. It is shameful to commit theft, and therefore it is shameful to suffer as a thief. It is shameful to violate any law of man established by competent authority, which is not opposed to the law of God, that is, to be an evil-doer, a malefactor in the eye of the law, and therefore it is shameful to be punished for such a violation as an evil-doer or malefactor. When such punishments have been incurred, the person subjected to them ought to be ashamed ; and, when they are not felt to be shameful by the criminal, it is a proof of most deplorable obtuseness of moral apprehension and feeling.

Nor are sufferings which are the punishment of violation of positive public law the only sufferings which are of a shameful kind. All suffering which is the effect of improper conduct is shameful, just in proportion as the conduct which has produced it is shameful. There are many very improper acts or habits which are not, and cannot, be the subject of public law, lying beyond or below its sphere, which yet naturally bring down on those characterised by them appropriate, and it may be severe punishment. For example, "the busy-body in other men's matters," whether his intrusive interference originate in mere impertinent curiosity, or in worse motives, is likely to suffer by exclusion from respectable society, by general contempt, and, it may be, in even more substantial forms ; and his sufferings, whatever they may be, are disgraceful sufferings—sufferings of which he ought to be ashamed.

By many interpreters, I am aware that "the busy-body" here is considered as equivalent to "the seditious person," who, in a private station, plots against the existing order of society, meddling with things too high for him, and who consequently is naturally enough classed along with the murderer and the thief, as drawing down on himself deserved punishment from the hand of violated law ; but I think it more likely that the Apostle meant to warn Christians against exposing themselves, not only to shameful sufferings,

as violaters of public law, but to shameful suffering, originating in impropriety of behaviour of whatever kind.*

It may seem strange that the Apostle should caution those to whom he wrote, and whom he had represented as “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ ; as begotten again to a living hope ; as the heirs of an incorruptible, undefiled, unfading inheritance, reserved in heaven for them,” to which they were “kept by the power of God through faith ;” as having “tasted that the Lord is gracious ;” as “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation ;” it may seem strange that he should have thought it needful to caution such persons against exposing themselves to the penalties which the law denounces against theft and murder, or even to the minor punishments society inflicts on the pragmatical intermeddler.

It may be supposed that the Apostle meant not so much to warn those to whom he wrote against murder, theft, and impertinent intrusion in other men’s matters, as against affording to their malignant enemies even the shadow of an occasion of punishing them for these or similar crimes and improprieties. These were disposed to speak evil of them, and to punish them as malefactors. “By well-doing they were to seek to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men ;” and their conduct was to be so harmless, and blameless, and circumspect, that when charged before the tribunals of such crimes, their adversaries should find it impossible to substantiate their charge, and difficult even to give any thing like plausibility to it ; so that the result might be, that, instead of their being visited with the shameful punishment of murderers and thieves, “they who spoke evil of them as of evil-doers, should be made ashamed on account of their false accusation, of their good conversation in Christ ;” or if, as they often did, without evidence and against evidence, they

* See note A.

should proceed to punish them, that it might be made manifest to all that it was not for crimes which might be alleged, but which had not, could not be proved against them, but simply for their being Christians, that they were punished.

This, however, is not by any means the only passage in which Christians are cautioned against very gross sins. Exhortations to Christians in the apostolic epistles, not only proceed on the principle, that there were false professors in the primitive churches, who might discredit their profession by unholy conduct, but on the principle, that in the truly converted man, that is, "in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" and that, but for the restraining influence of the Spirit and Providence of God, there is scarcely any violation of the Divine law, into which remaining depravity, stimulated into active operation by powerful temptation, may not hurry him. To use the words of an old Scottish expositor, "Except Christians employ Christ's spirit to apply that virtue which he hath purchased by his death, for the changing of their nature, and mortifying of the love of sin in their hearts, and study watchfulness in their carriage, they will readily break out in those abominations, for which even heathens would justly put them to suffer: for this direction of the Apostle's does import, that except Christians did watch and pray, and make use of Christ's death for mortification of sin within them, to which duties he had stirred them up before, they were in hazard to break out in the sins here mentioned, and so be put to suffer 'as murderers, thieves, evil-doers, and busy-bodies in other men's matters.'" ¹

These practices, referred to by the Apostle, were shameful in themselves, shameful by whomsoever committed; but they were obviously peculiarly shameful in Christians. It was disgraceful for a heathen to suffer for such causes, what then must it have been for a Christian? Sin is hateful in

¹ Nisbett.

every man, additionally hateful in a professor of Christianity; nowhere so hateful as in the heart and life of a child of God. It is not wonderful then that the Apostle should say, "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters." By exposing himself to punishment for the violation of the laws, a Christian would draw down discredit, not only on his own character, but on the Christian cause, giving occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. He would destroy his own inward peace, and, by making shipwreck of character, render it scarcely possible that he should ever have it in his power to repair, in any good measure, the injury he had done to the worthy name.¹

It ill becomes such persons to complain of their sufferings, but it well becomes them to be ashamed of them, and especially to be ashamed of their cause. Nothing is more deplorable than to find men bearing the name of Christ, after involving themselves in suffering by their imprudence and sin, exposing themselves to the penalties of the law, or drawing down odium on themselves and reproach on religion, by their conceited officiousness or impertinent intermeddling; instead of being ashamed of their conduct, actually taking credit for it; pleasing themselves with the thought that they are persecuted for righteousness sake, when they are only suffering for their faults; and imputing that to the malice of their enemies, which is but the natural result of their own folly and wickedness. It becomes such persons to blush and weep; to retire as much as may be from the public gaze, and "to walk softly all their years."

But however carefully and successfully the primitive Christians might avoid all such disgraceful sufferings, discreditable to themselves and injurious to their religion; sufferings they were not likely to escape, sufferings of another kind. Though they should violate no civil law which was not in direct opposition to the Divine law, though they

¹ "Martyrem facit non poena, sed causa."—AUGUSTINE.

should “live quiet and peaceable lives,” minding their own business, and not intermeddling with what did not concern them; and though they should act so circumspectly that even their enemies, watching for their halting, could find nothing which they could plausibly represent as a violation of law, or an undue interference with the affairs of others, yet still they were likely, aye, they were sure, to meet with sufferings—it might be very severe sufferings; sufferings in their external form of a very shameful and degrading character—just because they were Christians; just because they made a consistent profession of the faith of Christ, acknowledging him as their teacher and Lord, observing his institutions and obeying his laws. Though, as in the case of Daniel, no occasion might be found against them on other grounds, an occasion would be found against them “concerning the law of their God.”¹

Such were the sufferings inflicted on the Apostles and first teachers and professors of Christianity, of which we have a record in the Acts of the Apostles; sufferings, for the infliction of which, in some cases, no cause was even alleged but that they were Christians; and in others where, though other causes were alleged, this was indeed the true reason. The time was come of which our Lord had spoken, when his followers were to be “hated by all nations,”² both by the Jews and the Gentiles, “for his name sake,” just because they were Christians. To be a Christian, was a sufficient reason with the Jews why a man should be cast out of the Synagogue; and with the Romans, why he should be treated as a criminal. At a somewhat later period we find an imperial edict, that of Trajan, which seems to have been intended rather to mitigate the severity of the treatment to which Christians, as Christians, had been exposed, requiring that, though Christians were not to be officially sought after, such as were accused and convicted of an adherence to Christianity were to be put to death;³ their Christianity,

¹ Dan. vi. 5.² Matt. xxiv. 9.³ Plinii Epp. ix. 97, 98.

apart from every thing else, being considered as a capital offence.

And if thus, as Christians, exposed to sufferings so serious in the shape of legal inflictions, it is quite plain that, in the ordinary intercourse of life, they must have been liable to an endless variety of annoyance, living in the midst of men who, whether Jews or Heathens, regarded their religion with sentiments of abhorrence and contempt. These sufferings were in many cases, in their own nature, of a degrading character. Christians were, as the Apostle expresses it, “shamefully entreated.” The punishments inflicted were such as were commonly inflicted on the vilest criminals, on felons and slaves. Stripes and the cross, punishments which could be legally inflicted on no Roman citizen, fell to the lot of many of them, from the hands of the multitude; and from the great body of their fellow citizens they received “cruel mockings;” their names were cast out as evil, and they were treated by them “as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things.”¹

But of sufferings of this kind, however ignominious in their own character, however fitted to express the contempt of those who inflicted them, and excite the shame of those who endured them, they were not to be ashamed. They were not to count them really dishonourable. In truth, they were not. The most ignominious treatment, when it is unmerited, reflects dishonour not on him who innocently endures, but on him who unjustly inflicts it. To profess what we believe to be true, and to do what we believe to be right, to refuse to give either explicit or tacit approbation of what we account false and wrong, to acknowledge obligations to a Divine benefactor for favours of unappreciable value in the manner that Divine benefactor enjoins, can never be dishonourable. No contumely, poured on Christians, could in the slightest degree affect the truth or excellence of Christ’s doctrine and law; or lay a foundation for a

¹ Heb. xi. 36. 1 Cor. iv. 13.

moment, on the supposition of their Divine origin, for any reasonable doubt of the wisdom and rectitude of their conduct who had embraced that doctrine, and submitted to that law. The disgrace plainly lay with the authors, not with the victims, of these sufferings. The persecutor, not the persecuted, had reason to be ashamed of the sufferings inflicted on Christians, as Christians.

But the Apostle exhorts the persecuted Christians, not only not to be ashamed of such sufferings, but to “glorify God on this behalf.” They are to consider these ignominious sufferings as indeed an honour and a privilege, and they are to thank God for them, and while under them to act such a part as will glorify him; expressing their sense of the honour done to them not only in words, but in submitting to these sufferings with cheerfulness, and with patience and fortitude enduring them. They are to reckon it a proper subject of thanksgiving, that to them “it is given, on behalf of Christ Jesus, not only to believe but to suffer for his sake,” and to “rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” They should account it a token of the confidence reposed in them by their Divine leader, when he places them, as it were, in the fore ranks in the battle, and calls on them to “suffer great things for his name sake.” They should rejoice in the opportunity thus given them of showing their gratitude to him who for them “endured the cross and despised the shame;” who, in the cause of their salvation, “gave his back to the smiters, his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: hid not his face from shame and spitting, but set his face as a flint,” and amid all contumelies knew that he should not ultimately be ashamed.¹

They should be thankful for these sufferings as fitted to promote their personal, spiritual improvement, both in holiness and in comfort, such “tribulations working *patience*,” that is, leading to perseverance not to apostasy; such “*patience working experience*,” that is, such perseverance leading to

¹ Acts v. 41. Phil. i. 29. Acts ix. 16. Heb. xii. 2. Isa. l. 6, 7.

proof, both of the reality and the strength of the principles of the new life ; and such “experience working hope,” such proof strengthening the hope of eternal life, by proving, that it is indeed founded on the gospel really believed, and will be a hope which shall never make ashamed.¹ Well may Christians glory in such tribulations ; tribulations fitted, and intended to have, secured of having, such glorious results.

Still farther, and finally, they should glorify God on account of such sufferings, because their tendency, when endured in the right spirit, was greatly to advance the cause of Christ. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. Persecution very generally falls out to the furtherance of the gospel. The patient, joyful endurance of most cruel and contumelious wrongs by Paul and Silas, was probably highly influential in producing the conversion of the Philippian jailer. The faith and patience of the martyrs amid their sufferings, more impressively than all their eloquence, declared the power of Divine grace, and the efficacy of the gospel. They have made torturers ashamed, and induced beholders to take share with those who were tortured. This consideration had great influence on Paul’s mind, in enabling him to glory in his sufferings as a Christian, and to glorify God on their behalf. “I rejoice in my sufferings for you,” says he to the Colossians, “and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body’s sake, which is the church ;” and in the Epistle to Timothy, “*I endure*” patiently, joyfully suffer “all things for the elect’s sake, that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ, with eternal glory.”²

Christians in every country, and in every age, are bound to regulate themselves by the direction we have been endeavouring to illustrate. From a regard to the honour of their religion and their Saviour, they are bound carefully to avoid every thing which may justly bring on them contempt or punishment, knowing that Christ has entrusted the reputa-

¹ Rom. v. 3-5.

² Col. i. 24. 2 Tim. ii. 10.

tion of his religion to their care ; and that its character is so identified with theirs, that the one cannot be injured without affecting the other ; while at the same time they are never, under the influence of a false shame, to shrink from suffering for professing the faith, and obeying the law, of their Lord, however ignominious a form that suffering may wear, ever bearing in mind his impressive words, “Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” “Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father and the holy angels.”¹ He who counts these faithful sayings, will not be ashamed of suffering as a Christian. He will be disposed to say with the Apostle, “I suffer trouble as an evil-doer, even unto bonds ; for I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.”

IV.—PERSEVERING IN WELL-DOING, COMMIT YOUR SOULS TO GOD UNDER SUFFERINGS.

The last direction which the Apostle gives to persecuted Christians is, “Persevering in well-doing, commit the keeping of your souls to God under your sufferings.” “For the time is come when judgment must begin at the house of God : and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God ? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ? Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him, as to a faithful Creator.”

A careful reader will see that these three verses are very closely connected ; that the statements in the seventeenth and eighteenth verses are the foundation on which the

¹ Matt. x. 32. Luke xii. 8.

directions in the nineteenth are based, or the motives by which they are enforced. The statement is twofold. Severe afflictions are awaiting the professors of the faith of Christ, and still more tremendous evils are impending over those who believe not the gospel, or who apostatise from the faith. And the direction is twofold also. Commit your souls to God, that you may be enabled to sustain those severe afflictions; and do this in well-doing, in a constant continuance in well-doing, in a perseverance in the faith, profession, and practice of Christianity, that you may escape these tremendous evils. Such seems the connexion of the Apostle's thoughts.

"The time is come when judgment must begin at the house of God; a time in which the righteous shall scarcely be saved: therefore, let them who suffer by the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him, as to a faithful Creator." The "house of God," in Old Testament language, would signify either the temple of Jerusalem; or—understanding the word figuratively as equivalent to family, as it is so often used—the Israelitish people. In the language of the New Testament, it signifies the Christian church, Christians. "Know ye not," says the Apostle, "that ye are the temple of God?" "His house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope steadfast to the end." It is they who obey the gospel of Christ, as contradistinguished from the unbelievers or the apostates, who do not obey the gospel of Christ.¹ "The righteous" is obviously just another appellation for the same individuals, and describes their character as opposed to the wicked, "the ungodly, and the sinner." The words then signify, 'a period is arrived, or is just at hand, when a very severe trial of Christians, a trial of some continuance, is about to commence; when judgment, or rather *the* judgment,² shall begin at the house of God.'³

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 16. Heb. iii. 6.

² *To scize.*

³ There seems here an allusion to Ezek. ix. 6. "Slay utterly old and young—and begin at my sanctuary."

There seems here a reference to a particular judgment or trial, that the primitive Christians had reason to expect. When we consider that this epistle was written within a short time of the commencement of that awful scene of judgment which terminated in the destruction of the ecclesiastical and civil polity of the Jews, and which our Lord had so minutely predicted, we can scarcely doubt of the reference of the Apostle's expression. After having specified wars and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes, as symptoms of "the beginning of sorrows," our Lord adds, "Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. They shall deliver you up to councils and to synagogues, and ye shall be beaten; and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake: Ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And then many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold: but he that shall endure to the end, shall be saved. Except the Lord had shortened those days no flesh should be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days."¹

This is *the* judgment which, though to fall most heavily on the holy land, was plainly to extend to wherever Jews and Christians were to be found, "for where the carcass was, there were the eagles to be gathered together;" which was to begin at the house of God, and which was to be so severe that the "righteous should scarcely," that is, not without difficulty, "be saved." They only who stood the trial should be saved, and many would not stand the trial. All the truly righteous should be saved; but many who seemed to be righteous, many who thought themselves to be righteous,

¹ Matt. xxiv. 9-13, 22.

would not endure to the end, and so should not be saved; and the righteous themselves should be saved, not without much struggle, exertion, suffering; “saved as by fire.” Some have supposed the reference to be to the Neronian persecutions, which by a few years preceded the calamities connected with the Jewish wars and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Now, on entering on this scene of severe trial, they who were to “suffer according to the will of God”—a phrase marking the origin of their sufferings rather than the manner in which they were sustained; nearly equivalent to, ‘on account of the Divine will,’ that is, on account of their doing the Divine will—are enjoined to “commit the keeping of their souls to God, as to a faithful Creator.” To commit their souls, that is, themselves into the hands of God, to be kept by him, is just under a deep sense of their own incapacity to meet and sustain the trial in a way glorifying to God and advantageous to themselves, to resign themselves entirely to the guidance of God’s providence, and word, and Spirit, in the expectation that he will make their duty obvious to them in circumstances of doubt and perplexity; and, when their duty is made plain to them, enable them at all hazards to perform it, trusting not to their own understanding, but to the Divine wisdom; relying not on their own energies, but on the power of God; trusting that he will indeed keep that which they commit to him; protect them from all real evil; allow them to be exposed to no unnecessary, no useless suffering; lay on them no load of labour or suffering which he will not enable them to sustain; “not suffer them to be tried above what they are able to bear, but, with the temptation, give them a way of escape; “deliver them from every evil work, and preserve them unto his heavenly kingdom.”¹

This is obviously the general meaning; but there is something peculiar and emphatic in the phrase, “Commit the keeping of your souls to him.” They were to commit the

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 18.

care of their bodies, their lives, their reputation, their property, their relations to God, with a distinct understanding that they may be called on by him to part with them all ; and well pleased to part with them all, in the assurance that their souls are safe in his keeping ; safe in life, safe in death, safe for ever ; “ bound up in the bundle of life with the beloved.”¹

He who thus commits the keeping of his soul to God, is ready for all trials, however severe. Such a person will be “ anxious about nothing ; and while “ in every thing, by prayer and supplication, he makes his requests known to God,” his need will be supplied according to God’s glorious riches ; and “ the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep his mind and heart through Christ Jesus.”²

The persecuted Christians are encouraged thus to commit the keeping of their souls to God, by the consideration that he is “ a faithful Creator.” He is their Creator. He not only is the “ Father of their spirits” and the former of their bodies, as he is of the spirits and bodies of all men, but He has “ of his own will begotten them by the word of truth, through the resurrection of Christ Jesus from the dead, so that they are a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.” They are not only his creatures, but his “ new creatures ;” his “ workmanship created anew unto good works.”³ To whom should they commit the keeping of their souls but to him ? They are his property ; more his than their own. He is able to take care of them. He who made them can preserve them. Conservation does not require greater power than creation. And he is disposed to take care of them. He hates none of his creatures ; he loves all his new creatures with a peculiar, an unchangeable, an eternal love. Looking at him as their Creator, they may well be persuaded that he is able and that he is willing to keep that

¹ 1 Sam. xxv. 29.

² Phil. iv. 6, 7.

³ Heb. xii. 9. James i. 18. Eph. ii. 10.

which, in obedience to his own command, they have committed to him.

And then he is not only a Creator, but “a faithful Creator.” He is faithful to fulfil the expectations of support and protection, which the very relation of Creator is fitted to excite in the mind of an intelligent, loyal creature. The new creature cannot but have an expectation, that he who has given it true life will preserve it, will never let it perish. This is an instinct of the new nature; and “he will fulfil the desire of them that fear him, he also will hear their cry and save them.” “The Lord preserveth all them that love him.” Besides, he has given to them as his creatures, his new creatures, “exceeding great and precious promises.” We shall quote a few of them: “In six troubles God shall deliver thee; in seven no evil shall touch thee. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. The Lord is thy keeper, the Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, the Lord shall preserve thy soul. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and the flood shall not overflow thee; when thou passest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle on thee. I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any one pluck them out of my Father’s hand. Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, can separate” those created anew in Christ Jesus “from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.” “Faithful is he who hath promised, who also will do it.” “He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said it, and will he not do it? Hath he promised it, and will he not make it good?” “All these promises are yea, amen, in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us.”¹

¹ Job v. 19-25. Psal. xci.; cxxi. 7, 8. Isa. xlii. 2. John x. 28-30. Rom. viii. 38, 39.

Nothing but this committing unreservedly the keeping of the soul to God as a faithful Creator, could meet the exigencies of the case, and fit for so severe and complicated a trial. This only would enable the persecuted Christian so to endure the trial as to "obtain the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to those who love him."

Connected with the statement, that very severe trials were awaiting Christians, the Apostle makes a very impressive announcement of the dreadful doom of "those who obey not the gospel of God." The beginning of the judgment was to come on the house or family of God; the end of it on them who obey not the gospel of God. The first drops were to fall on the former, the collected tempest on the latter; the first were to be chastened, severely chastened, but on the last was to come "wrath to the uttermost." The first were to be "saved as by fire," the others were to be "destroyed with an everlasting destruction;" the one getting into a place of safety with difficulty, the other finding no place of shelter from the "fiery indignation which was to devour the adversaries" of God. This is more strongly expressed in the interrogative form than it could be by any direct affirmation. "What shall the end be? Where shall they appear?"

It may be right to remark in passing, that the eighteenth verse is a quotation from the Greek version of the thirty-first verse of the eleventh chapter of the book of Proverbs. Our English version, which is an accurate rendering of the Hebrew text, gives a meaning, which seems at first altogether different. "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed on the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner." Though these words may, and probably do mean, 'Even really good men are chastened for their sins, and, if so, surely the wicked and the sinner shall be punished with a severity suited to the heinousness of their guilt,' a sentiment not materially different from that in the passage before us; at the same time this does seem an instance in which the inspired writer merely uses the words of the Greek translation of the Scriptures, as the vehicle of his own thoughts, with-

out any particular reference to their meaning and bearing in the place from which they are borrowed.

If we have not misapprehended altogether the meaning of this paragraph, the direct reference in these words is to the tremendous evils which came upon the Jewish opposers of Christianity very soon after these words were written. These were "the days of vengeance," days in which there was "such affliction as had not been from the beginning of the creation which God created till that time, neither shall be." Nor are we called to limit these words to the calamities which befell the unbelieving and impenitent Jews in their own land and other lands, dreadful as, we know from the authentic narrative of their own historian Josephus, these were. These to them were not "the end" of the judgment. They were foreshadowing symbols of that everlasting destruction in the world to come, which awaited them, along with all who, like them, "obey not the gospel of God ;" and, in opposition to all the means used for reclaiming them, continue ungodly and sinners.

As the statement concerning the severe trial to which Christians were to be exposed is made the basis of the exhortation, "Commit the keeping of your souls to God, as unto a faithful Creator ;" so this statement respecting the perdition of ungodly men seems to us to be the basis of the exhortation, "Commit the keeping of your souls to God *in well-doing*." It is evident at the twentieth verse of the second chapter, that "to suffer for well-doing" is just equivalent to suffering as a Christian, suffering on account of the consistent profession of the faith of Christ. And "the constant continuance in well-doing," in which Christians are "to seek for glory, honour, and immortality," is plainly just the persevering faith of the doctrines and practice of the duties of Christianity. The persecuted Christians were to continue in well-doing. They had done well in embracing the gospel, denying themselves, and becoming followers of Christ ; and they must persevere in doing well, by holding fast their profession.

Should they not thus persevere in well-doing, but, under the power of terror and shame, abandon the cause of Christ, making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, they would make a miserable exchange of circumstances. They must in this case take their place among the ungodly and sinners, who obey not the gospel of God. However severe the trials of Christians may be, they are nothing compared with the punishment which awaits the impenitent and unbelieving. Even in this world, some of the apostates of that age, in seeking to escape the persecution to which Christians were exposed, involved themselves in still more dreadful calamities. They who in Jerusalem remained faithful to Christ, following his command, left the doomed city, embracing an opportunity very wonderfully offered to them, and so were saved, saved with difficulty; while the apostates continued, and perished miserably in the siege and sack of that city. In the times of the severest persecution, it is men's wisdom, by embracing the gospel, to cast in their lot with the afflicted people of God. That is the only way of escaping evils immeasurably more dreadful than any which the malignant ingenuity of earth or hell can inflict on the saints; and it is madness, absolute madness, to purchase security from persecution, and all that this world can bestow, at the price of apostasy. "For he who turns back, turns back to perdition." Since, then, trials so severe were awaiting the church of God, and seeing destruction so awful was impending over those ungodly men and sinners, who either by impenitence or apostasy were disobedient to the gospel of God, how appropriate and how powerfully enforced the injunction of the Apostle, "Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator!"

The two injunctions are most intimately connected. It is only he who is continuing in well doing, that in the day of severe trial can commit the keeping of his soul to God, as to a faithful Creator; and it is only he who commits the keeping of his soul to God, as to a faithful Creator, that in the day of

severe trial will continue in well-doing. All others will become weary in well-doing under persecution; and silently withdraw from, or openly renounce connexion with, the oppressed persecuted church of Christ.

There are two general principles of a practical kind, and of very general application, naturally suggested by what we have said, to which I would call your attention for a moment before we conclude.

They who obey the gospel may count on varied, and, it may be, severe trials previously to their obtaining "the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory;" and they who obey not the gospel can reasonably count on nothing but everlasting perdition.

They who obey the gospel are as sure of salvation as the love and power, the faithfulness and wisdom, of God can make them. The righteous, those "justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," those sanctified by the Spirit through the truth, will certainly be saved. When it is said they are "scarcely saved," the reference is not to the uncertainty of their being saved, but to the difficulties and trials they may experience in the course of their being saved. All Christians are not tried as the Christians to whom Peter wrote, the Christians at the close of the Jewish dispensation; but all Christians meet with afflictions, and meet with afflictions because they are Christians; all suffer, and all suffer as Christians. We must never think ill of a cause merely because it is persecuted, nor indulge dark thoughts respecting the spiritual state and prospects of men merely because they are very severely afflicted. The absence of trial is a worse sign than what we might be disposed to think the excess of trial. "If ye were without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then were ye bastards, and not sons."¹ But it is not exposure to trial, but the endurance of trial, in "a patient continuance in well-

¹ Heb. xii. 8.

doing," that is the characteristic mark of those who obey the gospel of God. Let Christians, then, not wonder at their trials, however severe. Let them not count strange even the fiery trial, as if some strange thing had happened to them; and let them seek, by rightly improving their trials, to convert them into proofs of saintship and means of salvation.

They who obey not the gospel of God can reasonably count on nothing but unmixed misery, everlasting perdition. "If judgment begin at the house of God, what will the end be of those who obey not the gospel of God? and, if the righteous scarcely be saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" These words most strikingly bring before our minds both the severity and the certainty of the punishment which awaits the wicked. If even the children of God, the objects of his peculiar love, are severely chastened for their faults in this season of Divine forbearance, what can those who are the objects of his moral disapprobation and judicial displeasure expect, but the unmitigated punishment of their sin, under an economy which is the revelation of his righteous judgment, where justice is to have free course and to be glorified? If the trials to which the righteous are exposed are so varied and severe, that, though saved, they are "saved as by fire," saved with difficulty, with a struggle, after "a great fight of affliction," what will be the state of those who are not to be saved at all—not saved, but destroyed with an everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power? If even children are so chastened, how will hardened rebels be punished? "If these things are done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry?" Oh! that men who obey not the gospel of God could be but induced to lay these things to heart. If they continue disobedient to the gospel, there is no hope; for there is no atoning sacrifice, no sanctifying Spirit, no salvation, but the sacrifice, the Spirit, the salvation revealed in the gospel.

But why should they not obey this gospel? Is it not "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance?" Oh! why

will they reject the counsel of God against themselves? If they continue to reject this counsel of peace they must perish: but there is no necessity of rejecting this counsel of peace, but what originates in their own unreasonable, wicked obstinacy.

I conclude, in words full of comfort to the first of these classes of whom I have been speaking, and full of terror to the second. May God carry them home with power to the hearts of both! "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." "The Lord is not slack concerning his declaration, as some men count slackness; but he is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come unto repentance. He that, being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."¹

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 9; iii. 9. Prov. xxix. 1.

NOTE A.

It must be admitted that there is a strange disparity between “the busy-body,” and “the thief,” and “the murderer.” It is an ingenious conjecture, but nothing more, of Dr Mangey, that a very early transcriber may have written *αλλοτριοεπισκοπος*, which appears in all existing manuscripts, for *αλλοτριοεπικλοπος*, “a purloiner of other men’s property.” There is more weight in Bishop Barrington’s suggestion—“This caution probably owed its origin to the temper and conduct of the Jews at this period. They were peculiarly fond of intermeddling in the public councils and concerns of other bodies of men. Josephus, de Bell. Jud., lib. ii. c. xviii. § 7, 8, gives an excellent comment on this apostolical prohibition. He relates that his countrymen, “needlessly mixing with the Greeks assembled at Alexandria on their own affairs, and acting the part of spies, greatly suffered for it.” This took place A.D. 66, just about the time this Epistle was written.—*Vide* BOWYER’S Conjectures, p. 603, 4.

DISCOURSE XXI.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS ENJOINED AND ENFORCED.

1 PET. v. 1-5.—The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock: and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away. Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

IN the preceding portions of this Epistle, the Apostle has instructed those to whom he wrote in many of their religious and moral duties in their individual capacity, and also in many of their duties as members of domestic and civil society. In the paragraph which comes now before us, he writes to them that they “may know how they ought to behave themselves in the house of God.” He gives them a directory for their conduct, as office-bearers or private members of a Christian church. The duties of office-bearers in the church to those committed to their charge, and the duties of the members of the church, both to their office-bearers and to each other, are here very succinctly stated, and very powerfully enforced.

With regard to the office-bearers of the church, here termed “the elders,” the whole of their duty is represented

as consisting in acting the part of shepherds and overseers of that portion of the flock or family of God committed to their care; the temper or disposition in which this duty must be discharged is described, both negatively and positively, “not by constraint, not for filthy lucre, not as lords of God’s heritage,” but “willingly, of a ready mind, as ensamples to the flock;” and to secure a conscientious performance of this duty, besides employing his personal influence with them, as being himself “also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed,” the Apostle turns their attention to the peculiar character of the church as “the flock” and “heritage of God,” and to the rich reward which shall be conferred on the faithful under shepherds and overseers, by the chief Shepherd and Overseer at his “glorious appearing,” and their “gathering together to him.”

With regard to the members of the church, who, with a reference to their office-bearers being termed “elders,”¹ are, we apprehend, described by the cognate appellation “younger,”² or juniors, just as if the office-bearers had been termed fathers, they would have been termed children; their duty to their office-bearers is described under the general word, “submission.”

The duty of all connected with the Christian church, whether as officers or private members, is enjoined under the expression, mutual subjection. Humility is enjoined as necessary in order to the right discharge of all these classes of duties; and the cultivation of this disposition, so requisite to the prosperity and good order of the church, is recommended by a strong statement, couched in the language of Old Testament scripture, of the peculiar complacency with which God regards the humble, and the contemptuous reprobation with which he regards the proud. Such is a brief analysis of the paragraph, which we will find of use in guiding our thoughts in our subsequent illustrations. The

¹ Ἠγεσθῆτες.

² Νεώτεροι.

peculiar duties of the rulers of the Christian church, the peculiar duties of the members of the Christian church, and the duties common to both, these are the important topics to which in the sequel your attention shall be successively directed.

I. OF THE DUTIES OF THE RULERS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

And first, of the duties of the rulers of the Christian Church. For the right illustration of this part of our subject, it will be requisite that we consider first the appellation here given to those who rule in the Christian Church, and to whom that appellation properly belongs; secondly, the duty which they are required to perform; thirdly, the manner in which that duty ought to be performed; and lastly, the motives by which the performance of this duty in this manner is enforced.

CHAP. I. THE APPELLATION HERE GIVEN TO THE RULERS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, "ELDERS."

§ 1.—*The origin and meaning of the appellation.*

The appellation here given to the rulers of the Church, those who were to act the part of shepherds to it, as the flock of God, the part of overseers to it as the family of God, is that of "elders," or presbyters, which is just the Greek word with an English termination. "The elders, or presbyters, who are among you, I exhort." The word in its literal signification describes the person to whom it is given as of comparatively advanced age. As rule ought to be committed only to those who are characterised by knowledge and wisdom; as in ordinary circumstances these are not to be expected in a high degree in very young persons, since both qualifications are generally understood to be of somewhat difficult acquirement and slow growth; and as in the simplest form of human government, the domestic, the elder members

of the society are the ruling members in it, and as, where the ruling orders in civil society are elective, they are generally chosen from among those of at least mature age, it is not at all wonderful that the appellation, primarily significant merely of superior age, should have been very generally employed to denote superior dignity and authority. The Hebrew ordinary civil rulers are termed "the elders of Israel." The assembled magistrates of Rome were termed the senate or meeting of elders, and its individual members senators. In some of the most extensively spoken continental languages, the title expressive of dignity and rule, and which we would render by the word lord, actually signifies just elder;¹ and the English term alderman, descriptive of municipal authority and power in many cities, is just an antiquated form of the word elder man.

It has been the opinion of some of the most judicious and learned students of the history of apostolical and primitive Christianity, that the constitution of the Christian church was, under apostolic guidance, "modelled for the most part after that religious community with which it stood in closest connexion, the Jewish synagogue; such modifications, however, taking place as were required by the nature and design of the Christian community, and the new and peculiar spirit by which it was animated."² In this case it would have been strange if the designation by which managers of the affairs of the Jewish synagogue, elders, had not been transferred to the superintendents of the Christian church. And we cease to wonder that we have no particular account of the formal establishment of the office of elders, the existing order of things in the synagogues for religious instruction and discipline, very probably originally organized by inspired men, silently, under apostolic superintendence and with apostolic sanction, without the formality of express legislative enactment, being transferred to the meetings of the disciples, the churches of Christ.

¹ Senor, seigneur.

² Vitringa, Whately, Neander.

With the exception of "the deacons," a term signifying ministers or servants, who obviously as deacons had no part in the government of the church, "the elders" appear to be the only ordinary set of office-bearers in the apostolic and primitive churches. In an inspired account of the constitution of the Christian church, we are informed, when her only Lord and King ascended on high "he gave," that is, he appointed, and qualified, and commissioned "some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edification of the body of Christ."¹ The office of the Apostles was altogether peculiar, and they who filled it were intended for the benefit of the church in all ages. They were the accredited messengers of Christ. They had his mind.² He spake by them, and wrought by them; and though they have long left this world, in their inspired writings they are still in the church, according to the promise of their Lord, "sitting on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of the spiritual Israel;" and in the same writings they are still "going into all the world, proclaiming the gospel;" and their Lord by his Spirit is with them, and will continue to be with them till the end of the world. The prophets necessarily disappeared when the prophetic spirit was withdrawn. The evangelists seem not to have been properly office-bearers in the church, but messengers from the church to the world lying under the wicked one; and the missionary, in the later ages of the church, seems to fill a place similar to that occupied by the evangelist in the primitive age. The pastors and teachers, which terms do not seem to denote two distinct classes of men, but two functions of the same general class, seem to be the only permanent ordinary office-bearers appointed for the putting and keeping in fit order, for that is the meaning of the word rendered "perfecting the saints," those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, the disciples, the brethren;

¹ Eph. iv. 11, 12.² 2 Cor. ii. 16.

for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; and, as we will see by and by, these pastors and teachers were just the same persons who are here called elders.

In another inspired account by the same Apostle of the constitution of the Christian church, we are informed that "God hath set some in the church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers; after that miracles; then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."¹ Here it is plain that the apostles, the prophets, the workers of miracles of various kinds, do not belong to the permanent order of the church. Fact has decided that question. "Helps" or helpers seem plainly the deacons; while the teachers and the governments are just the same class of persons as the pastors and teachers, their two different functions of instruction and rule being mentioned in an inverse order in the two cases.

As this order of men received the appellation of elders on the same ground as rulers have generally been designated by some such title,² and as occupying in the church materially the same place as the Jewish elders did in the synagogue; so, from the great design of their appointment, they are not unfrequently termed bishops, which is an anglicised Greek word, disguised in this way in our version of the New Testament, there is reason to believe, to serve a purpose, and an unworthy one, but which means neither more nor less than our English word "overseers;" by which word indeed, to serve a purpose too, and the same one, it is in one or two cases rendered. That the only bishops known in the New Testament are the same class of persons who are termed elders, may be made very plain in a very few words. Paul,

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 28.

² "Πρεσβυτερος, id est senior, est nomen quod tribuitur Ministris Ecclesiæ, sive quia olim Ministri Ecclesiæ plerumque deligebantur, qui jam essent grandioris ætatis: sive potius quia Ministri Ecclesiæ moribus senes referre debent, iisque is tribuendus honor, qui senibus tribui solet; ita igitur nomen non est ætatis sed officii et dignitatis.—SUICER.

on his journey from Macedonia to Jerusalem, sent from Miletus, and called the elders of Ephesus: and, when these elders had come, he exhorted them to “take heed to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, bishops.” Paul, writing to Titus, states, that he had left him in Crete, to ordain elders in every city. He enumerates the qualifications of an elder, and then adds, “for a bishop” or overseer “must be blameless,” &c.¹ If this does not identify the bishop with the elder, what can do it? Suppose a law pointing out the qualification of a sheriff was to say—A sheriff must be a man of good character, great activity, and resolute spirit, for it is highly necessary the chief magistrate of the county should be of unspotted reputation, would it be possible to come to any other conclusion than that, in the eye of the legislature, the sheriff and the first magistrate of the county were just two names for the same officer? How inconsistent would it be to say to a captain—In appointing sergeants you must only appoint men of such qualifications, specifying them, and then add, for these are the proper qualifications for a general or field-marshal? But we need not go farther than the text in search of the identification of the Christian elder, and the apostolic bishop, and the apostolic pastor. “The elders I exhort: Act the part of pastors to the flock; shepherd them, acting the part of bishops, or overseers.”² The elders, in other words, are exhorted to act the part of good pastors, good bishops.

The whole care of a Christian church as a spiritual society, including instruction, superintendence, and discipline, was committed to these elders, though it is very probable that in the primitive churches, as among us, there were authorized public teachers who were not elders, and had no share in the management of any church.

¹ Acts xx. 17, 28; Tit. i. 5-7. *Επειδή λανθάνει τους πολλούς ἡ συνηθία, μαλιστα τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης, τους ἐπισκοπους πρεσβυτεροὺς ὀνομαζούσα, καὶ τους πρεσβυτεροὺς ἐπισκοπους, σημειῶνται τούτο ἐντιυθίν (Acts xx. 17, 28) καὶ ἐκ τῆς πρὸς Τίτον ἐπιστολῆς καὶ ἐκ τῆς πρὸς Τιμόθειον πρώτης.—Πρεσβυτεροὺς καὶ τους ἐπισκοπους, καὶ τῶν πράξεων βιβλος οὐδε ληγομένων.—In hunc loc.—ŒCUMENIUS.*

² Παιδαγωγία—ἐπισκοποῦντες.

It is plain there was a plurality of such elders in every church. These formed the eldership or presbytery of that church. In the church of Jerusalem when met for government, we find just the apostles' extraordinary officers, the elders' ordinary officers, and the brethren or church members who listened to their deliberations, and to whom their decision seemed good. We know there were deacons in that church; but their office was not rule, and therefore they are not named. The church of Philippi, which was set in order by the Apostle, was composed of "the saints in Christ Jesus," the private members; "with the bishops," overseers; elders, who ruled; and "the deacons," who served."¹

While the entire spiritual charge of the church was committed to the presbytery or meeting of elders, what we are in the habit of calling the session, there is evidence, not that the elders were divided into a pastor or pastors who only taught, and bishops who ruled; but that, while all the elders severally and in a body superintended and ruled, there were some of these elders "who laboured in word and doctrine," devoting themselves chiefly to the exposition and enforcement of the doctrine and law of our Lord Jesus.

It is comparatively a modern, at any rate it is not a New Testament usage, to apply the term pastor exclusively to those teaching elders, that term naturally expressing the whole work of the Christian eldership; and, like the kindred term bishop, being given in the New Testament to Christians elders indiscriminately. But that such a distinction as that between elders who taught and ruled, and elders who only ruled, existed from the beginning, is made probable by the reasonableness and almost necessity of the arrangement, and its obvious tendency to secure the gaining in the best way and in the greatest degree the ends of the Christian eldership; and appears to me proved by the passage in the first Epistle to Timothy, v. 17, of which, after all that has been said for the purpose of reconciling it to the episcopal

¹ Phil. i. 1.

or independent order of church polity, I am disposed to say with Dr Owen, that “on the first proposal of this text, that ‘the elders who rule well are worthy of double honours, especially those who labour in word and doctrine,’ a rational man who is unprejudiced, who never heard of the controversy about ruling elders, can hardly avoid an apprehension that there are two sorts of elders; some of whom labour in word and doctrine, and some who do not so.”

§ 2. *Qualifications of Christian elders.*

With regard to the qualifications which are necessary for filling the office of a Christian elder, we have full information in the Epistles of Paul to Timothy and Titus. “This is a true saying,” says he, in his first Epistle to Timothy, iii. 1, “If a man desire the office of a bishop,” an overseer, an elder, in the Christian church, “he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, nor covetous; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; for if a man know not how to rule his own family, how shall he take care of the house” the family “of God? Not a novice,” a late convert, “lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of those who are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” “Ordain elders,” says he to Titus, “in every city, as I had appointed thee. If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children, not accused of riot, or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince gainsayers.” These are qualifications which are requisite in all elders, though some

of them may be required in a higher degree in those who are called to labour in word and doctrine.

§ 3. *Of the manner in which Elders were invested with office.*

With regard to the manner in which the elders were invested with these offices in the apostolic church, we have comparatively little information. We know that Paul and Barnabas ordained elders in every church which was gathered by their ministry; and that Titus was enjoined by Paul to ordain elders in every city where the gospel had taken root. But we would undoubtedly err were we concluding that these offices were appointed by the Apostles or Evangelists, whatever their authority might be, without consulting the brethren. When we reflect on the nature and design of a Christian church, and take into consideration the probable method of electing an Apostle in room of Judas, and the distinctly recorded facts respecting the election of the deacons, we cannot doubt that the elders were elected by the brethren from among themselves, and presented by them to the Apostles, Evangelists, or other church rulers, who, with fasting, prayer, and laying on of hands, solemnly set them apart to the discharge of the functions of the office to which they had been chosen; thus, in the most impressive way, intimating their conviction of their fitness for the office, and their cordial acknowledgment of them as fellow labourers, and commending them to the special care and blessing of their common Lord. So much for the elders to whom the Apostle here addresses so solemn and affectionate an exhortation.

CHAP. II. OF THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN ELDERS.

§ 1. *Of the figurative terms in which these duties are described, acting the part of a shepherd and an overseer.*

Let us now, in the second place, attend to the duty which is here enjoined on these elders. They are enjoined to “feed the flock of God, and to take the oversight of it.” The two

words employed to describe the elder's duty, are suited to the two figurative representations here given us of the objects of their care. If viewed as the flock of God, they are to feed, or rather, as the word properly signifies, they are to act the part of shepherds to them. If viewed as the property of God, or the family of God, they are to act the part of overseers in reference to them. The Israelitish people are often in Scripture termed the flock of God, and their rulers appointed by him as their shepherds : they are represented as the peculiar property and as the family of God, and their rulers as overseers, tutors, governors, appointed by the Father. The Christian church is the antitype of the Israelitish people. The whole body of believers are the flock of God, the property of God, the family of God ; for in the new economy all things are of God by Christ Jesus. We are Christ's, Christ is God's. Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for the sheep, is the Great Shepherd, the Chief Shepherd, whose own the sheep are. To him is committed the care of the property which was purchased, redeemed to God, by his blood ; and he, as the Son, is entrusted with the management of the whole family called by his name. He is the shepherd, and bishop or overseer, of their souls.¹ Christian elders are here represented as under-shepherds, under-overseers ; and it is their duty to that portion of the flock of God, committed to their care, that the Apostle here refers to.

It has, I believe, been very generally supposed by interpreters, that the expression rendered "feed" refers solely to instruction ; and that rendered by "taking oversight," to discipline and government. If the term "feed" adequately represented the force of the original term, there might be a good deal said for this mode of interpretation ; for, no doubt, knowledge is mental food, and instruction is spiritual feeding ; but the truth is, the word signifies generally, act the part, discharge the duty, of a shepherd, and is ordinarily, when used in a figurative sense, significant of ruling, being

¹ John x. 11-14. Heb. iii. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 25.

applied to kings. To procure and administer food to the flock is an important part of the shepherd's duty, but it is not his only duty; he must strengthen the diseased, and heal the sick, and bind up the broken, and bring again that which was driven away, and seek that which was lost. He must go before them, and guide them, and govern them. The whole duties of the Christian eldership are included in shepherding the flock; and equally extensive is the other figurative representation of the elder feeding, that is, exercising, the taking care of. If it refer to property, how can such a property, consisting of immortal minds, be taken care of? Must not instruction, putting them in the way of taking care of themselves, be a part of the overseer's work? and, if it refer to a family, must not the good steward, tutor, and overseer, the ruler over his master's family, not merely superintend the conduct of the household, keep them at their proper work, out of mischief, away from danger, but "give to every one his portion of meat in due season?"¹ The first term does not, then, exclusively refer to instruction; nor the second to superintendence and government. They are two figurative representations, each of them embracing the whole compass of the duty of the eldership of a Christian church.

§ 2. *Of the duties themselves.*

The whole of the duties of the Christian eldership do, however, naturally enough range themselves under the two heads of instruction and discipline, or superintendence and government, and to these in their order I wish very briefly to call your attention.

(1.) *Instruction.*

First, then, Christian elders are to act the part of shepherds and overseers to those under their care, by providing and administering instruction to them. It is an important part of the shepherd's duty to find whole-

¹ Luke xii. 42.

some nourishing pasture for his flock. It is an important duty of the overseer of the family to see, that every member of it be furnished with a sufficient portion of suitable food. It is the truth as it is in Jesus, the doctrine and the law of Christ, that in the spiritual economy serve a purpose analogous to that which food does in the animal economy. Suitable wholesome food must be eaten and digested, in order to health and bodily growth, and, indeed, to the continuance of animal life; and Divine truth must be understood and believed, and thus become influential on the intellect, and conscience, and affections, in order to the continuance and to the healthy exercise of the functions, of the spiritual life of the new creature. The private members of the church, as well as the ministers of Jesus Christ, are "nourished up by the words of faith and good doctrine," whereunto they attain; and the "new-born babes grow" by "the sincere milk of the word," which the instincts of their new nature lead them to desire.

Regularly and effectually to meet this exigence is one leading object of the Christian eldership; and where suitable provisions are not made for securing the growing intelligence of the members of a Christian church, there must be, on the part of the eldership, most blameable neglect of duty. When the disciples come together on the first day of the week to observe the ordinances, the ordinance of "doctrine" or teaching must be attended to; and the assembled brethren must be taught to hold fast and observe all things, whether doctrine, law, or institution, which the Lord has commanded them. On these occasions, the elders who labour in word and doctrine should be prepared, after close study and fervent prayer, to present to their brethren a clear and impressive exhibition of the meaning, evidence, and practical bearing of some of our Lord's doctrines, or a perspicuous and practical explanation and enforcement of some of our Lord's laws, having a reference to what they know to be the necessities and capacities of their audience, taking care not to confine themselves to a few topics to discant on,

which may be peculiarly easy to themselves, and palatable to their hearers, but endeavouring, as much as possible, to bring out in the course of these exercises, so far as they have discovered it, "the whole counsel of God;" and withholding nothing that can be profitable, whether it may be pleasing or otherwise. When we consider how much the great body of Christians, belonging to the classes whose time is chiefly devoted to the obtaining the necessities and comforts of life for themselves and families, must be dependent on the instructions received on the Lord's day for their knowledge of Christian truth, the importance of endeavouring, on such occasions, to communicate the largest possible amount of distinct impressive instruction, both doctrinal and practical, on the part of Christian teachers, must appear great indeed.

The Christian preacher, if he is really wise, when teaching the people knowledge, will give good heed to his doctrine, that it be wholesome and nourishing; and, if possible, palatable. He will seek to find out, first, true and important thoughts, and then plain acceptable words; and he will endeavour that his words be as goads, entering readily, and as riveted nails when they have entered, sticking fast. The teaching elder ill discharges this, his highest duty, who satisfies himself with common-place statement or empty declamation; or who spends the hours of Christian instruction in metaphysical discussions, and questions that profit not. It has been well said, "To preach, to show the extent of our learning or the subtlety of our wit, to blazon them in the eyes of the people with the beggarly account of a few words which glitter, but causing little heat and less warmth, is a dishonest use of sacred time; it is not to preach the gospel, but ourselves:" it is not to feed, but to starve our hearers.

It is the duty of the Christian teaching elder, not only thus to teach publicly on the Lord's day, but also, as God gives opportunity, to teach from house to house, taking such opportunities for presenting Christian truth in a form more familiar than suits the character of public instruction, and more

suited to the circumstances of the individuals addressed. It seems to me also, that a Christian eldership are but following out the spirit of the injunction in the text, when they endeavour to secure for those under their care, the use of a truly select collection of books, fitted to promote the knowledge of Christian truth, the cultivation of Christian feeling, and the performance of Christian duty, by enabling them better to understand their Bibles, and employ their influence to induce them to peruse these books.

The seeking to have their brethren, under their care, growing in accuracy and extent of Christian knowledge, must ever be considered, by the Christian eldership, as the fundamental part of their duty. The church is the school of Christ, and the elders are the schoolmasters. The maxim, that ignorance is the mother of devotion, is utterly inapplicable to the religion of Christ. Knowledge is necessary in order to faith; and a well instructed Christian mind, is the only soil in which can grow and flourish the fair flowers and the rich fruits of devout feeling and holy conduct, "which are by Christ Jesus to the praise and glory of God."

The duty of instructing the brethren, lies with peculiar weight on the teaching elder. It is his business, his appropriate work, to which above all things he must give himself, and to which he must endeavour to make all things subservient. Whatever is cursorily done, this must be carefully done; and he must "study to prove himself a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." At the same time, every Christian elder, though not called to labour in word and doctrine, should endeavour to promote the instruction of the brethren. Every elder, or bishop, should be "apt to teach;" both able and disposed to communicate Christian instruction to his brethren. Indeed, till "the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea," it is the duty of every Christian man "to teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord." And the Christian elder, whose ordinary and principal business is to superintend and govern, is not

only warranted, but bound, to turn to account his intercourse with the brethren in discharging his appropriate functions, for directly as well as indirectly endeavouring to promote their progress in that knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, through which, and through which alone, grace, mercy, and peace, can be multiplied to them; through which, and through which alone, they can become the holy, happy, active, useful persons, that all members of a Christian church should be.

This duty of instruction should be performed to *all* the flock. The command of the chief Shepherd not only is, "Feed my sheep," but "feed my lambs;"¹ and there does seem something wanting in a Christian church, where provision is not made, and made by the elders, directly or indirectly, personally or by guiding and superintending the exertion of others, for the instruction of the younger branches of the family. The instruction of Christian children is the appropriate work of Christian parents, and is never likely to be so efficiently performed as by them; but it seems plain, that not only is it the duty of Christian elders, in their work of superintending and governing, to see that parents do their duty in this respect, but also, by a system of religious training, common to all the children connected with the church, not to supersede, but to assist and supplement parental instruction.

In these remarks, I have been preaching chiefly to two individuals: "my true yoke-fellow, who serves with me as a son in the gospel of Jesus Christ," and myself. The next department of the discourse will be directed to the brethren of the eldership, who rule, though they do not labour in word and doctrine. But if those illustrations of the law of Christ in reference to elders, serve, as I hope they will, their proper purpose in us and in them, the congregation are likely to be fully as much the better for them, as for any sermons they have ever heard addressed more directly to

¹ John xxi. 15-17

themselves. The importance and the difficulty of rightly instructing a Christian congregation, especially such a religious congregation as this, consisting of so many individuals, placed in such a variety of circumstances, and possessed of such a variety of capacities and tastes for religious mental training, are, I trust, justly estimated by your ministers; and it is our earnest wish, “by the manifestation of the truth, to commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” We would not willingly conceal nor corrupt any portion of the doctrines or the laws of our Lord. We wish to preach Christ, the sole authoritative teacher and law-giver, the sole atoning Saviour, the sole sovereign Lord; “warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” “Being allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, we would so speak, not as pleasing men but God, who trieth the hearts.” Sensible of the importance of rightly dividing the word of truth, we would “give attendance to meditation and to reading,” as well as to exhortation and doctrine; we would “shun profane and vain babblings, and speak the things, and only the things, that become sound doctrine;” in our teaching, “showing incorruptness, and sound speech that cannot be condemned.”¹

Help us, brethren, with your prayers. Pray for us, that our understandings may be more and more opened, that we may understand the Scriptures; that, being more thoroughly and extensively taught of God ourselves, we may be the better fitted for teaching you. “Brethren, I beseech you, for the Lord Jesus’ sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with us in your prayers for us; that our minds and hearts may be more and more filled with the truth, and the love of it; and that utterance may be given us, that we may open our mouths boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel; that the word of the Lord may

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 2. Col. i. 28. 1 Cor. i. 23. 2 Cor. iv. 5. 1 Thess. ii. 4. 1 Tim. iv. 13, 15. 1 Tim. vi. 20. Tit. ii. 1, 8.

have free course and be glorified among us;"¹ that we may speak it as it ought to be spoken, with firm faith and melting affection. It is your interest as well as ours, that you should be thus employed. "Were people much in the duty of prayer for their teachers, not only would the ministers be the better for it, the people themselves would receive back their prayers with much gain into their bosom. They would have the returned benefit of it, as the vapours that go from below fall down again upon the earth in sweet showers, and make it fruitful. If there went up many prayers for ministers, their doctrine would drop as the rain, and distil as the dew, and the sweet influence of it would make fruitful the valleys, the humble hearts receiving it."² And we pledge ourselves to reciprocate your friendly supplications. "God forbid that we should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you." Daily will we "bow our knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and in earth are named," that the gospel may come to you not in word only, but in power, with the Holy Ghost, and much assurance; "that he, God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power in you that believe;" transforming them by the renewing of their mind; purifying their hearts by faith; filling them with all joy and peace in believing; and "that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know

¹ Rom. xv. 30. Eph. vi. 19. Col. iv. 3 2 Thess. iii. 1.

² Leighton.

the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, being filled with all the fulness of God.”¹

(2.) *Superintendence.*

I proceed to remark, in the second place, that Christian elders are to act the part of shepherds and overseers to those under their care, by *superintending* and *governing* them. The shepherd has but imperfectly done his work when he has procured for, and administered to, his flock, wholesome nourishment. He must watch over them; he must not allow either wolves or goats to mix with them, and, should such find their way among them, must use appropriate means to get rid of them; he must endeavour to prevent the sheep from straying, and, when they do wander, he must employ every proper method to bring them back; he must endeavour to preserve them from the attacks of disease, and administer suitable preventives and medicines for prevailing maladies; and even at personal hazard he must protect them from those beasts of prey who go about seeking to devour them. The overseer or steward has but imperfectly done his duty, when he has secured that the children are furnished with suitable instruction. It is his business to see that they pay a proper attention to the instruction prepared for them, and make due improvement. He must look to the formation of their character and the direction of their conduct. He must take care that they are neither idle nor mischievous; that they are kind to each other, and dutiful to all. Both the shepherd and the overseer must be superintendents and governors. In like manner, the furnishing the flock and family of God with an abundance of wholesome spiritual nourishment, though, as we have seen, one most important part of the duty of Christian elders, is by no means the whole of it. The elders not only have to “speak the word of God” to their charge; they are to “have,” hold, or exercise “rule over

¹ Eph. i. 17-19; iii. 16-19.

them ;” they are to “care” for them, to “watch for their souls.”¹

The duties of rule or superintendence which devolve on Christian elders, may be considered either in reference to the Christian society over which they are placed, viewed as a body, or to the individual members of that body. The fundamental part of this duty, so far as the society is concerned, and without a careful performance of which the other duties, whether to the society or to its members, can only be very unsatisfactorily performed, is to take care that it is composed of the right materials. How could a shepherd manage a flock, composed of swine as well as of sheep? or how could an overseer manage a family, into which aliens, strange children, were continually intruding themselves? Nothing can be plainer from the New Testament than this, that though Christian churches are the grand means for converting the world, the apparent conversion of the worldling must precede, not follow, his admission into the church. The great ends to be gained by Christian churches, whether in reference to their Lord, as living manifestations of his truth, and holiness, and grace; or in reference to their members, edification in knowledge, faith, love, and Christian excellence and usefulness generally; or in reference to the world lying under the wicked one—their conviction and conversion will be gained just in the degree in which these societies are formed of men who really know and believe the truth, and have felt its transforming efficacy. The churches of Christ must be churches, that is, assemblies, societies, of saints, “separated persons,” “devoted persons,” “sanctified persons,” separated from the present evil world; devoted to the service of God and his Son; sanctified by the influence of the Holy Ghost. Such are the designations given the members of the church in the Apostolic Epistles. “Beloved of God, called to be saints, sanctified in Christ Jesus, calling on his name, brethren, faithful, elect,” that is, selected “by a

¹ Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24. 1 Tim. iii. 5; v. 17. Heb. xiii. 17.

spiritual separation to the obedience of faith, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, men that have obtained like precious faith with the apostles."

The office-bearers are "stewards of the mysteries of Christ." It is their business "to take the precious from the vile." They are builders of the temple of the Lord, which ought to be composed of "living stones," of precious materials; and they must take care that the materials they employ in building it up be not "wood, hay, and stubble," but "gold, silver, and precious stones."¹ Christian elders should admit none to the communion of the church except those who make an intelligent and credible profession of the faith; who, in the judgment of an enlightened charity, are Christians in the only true sense of that word; and should, as in every church will be the case, persons be admitted who are not what they appear to be, the elders should, in the exercise of an impartial discipline, when their real character is developed, exclude them from a place they should never have occupied; and by continuing to occupy which, while their characters remain unchanged, they can only do injury to all the interests which the Christian church is meant to subserve.

This healthy state of a Christian church is to be sought to be promoted by Christian elders, not only by careful admission and discipline, but by such a clear and faithful exhibition of the holy doctrines and laws of Christ, and by keeping the society so actively engaged in the great object of their association, the promoting each other's edification, and the advancing the cause of Christ in the world, as will make ungodly men little desirous, while they continue ungodly, to enter such a society; and if, by a mistake on either side, they have entered it, will make them soon feel that they can be comfortable in it in no other way than by imbibing the spirit and submitting to the law of its great Founder.

It is the duty of Christian elders not only thus to endea-

¹ Jer. xv. 15. 1 Cor. iii. 12-15.

vour to keep the society composed of right members, but in all their meetings to preside among them, keeping before them the law of Christ, taking care that they continue steadfastly in the observance of Christian institutions, keeping the ordinances committed to them by the Apostles, holding the traditions as taught in the Scriptures, the Apostle's doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and of prayers; that they do all things as a body which Christ Jesus has commanded them, and that they do them all decently, and in order.

But the Christian elders must not only thus shepherd the flock of Christ, oversee the family of God, viewed as an organized body, but they must act the part of shepherds and overseers to the individuals of which that flock and family are composed. This is indeed necessarily implied in the right discharge of their duty to the society as a society; for how can a society be kept pure but by its members being such as they should be; and how can this be secured but by superintending and watching individual conduct? The spiritual shepherd must "look well to his flock, and know the state of his herd." How otherwise can he "strengthen the diseased, heal the sick, bind up that which is broken, and bring again that which is driven away;" how is he to "warn the unruly, to comfort the feeble-minded, and to support the weak?"¹ It is the duty of the Christian elder not impertinently to intrude into private affairs, but carefully and affectionately to watch the whole conduct of those under his care, and to administer caution, encouragement, advice, comfort, rebuke, and exhortation, as circumstances require; and to do all this as an under-shepherd, an appointed overseer, in the name of Him, who, counting him trustworthy, has put him into this ministry.

In thus taking care of the house of God by ruling it, Christian elders are never to forget the true nature of their rule: they are "men under authority." They are not arbi-

¹ Ezek. xxxiv. 4. 2 Thess. v. 14.

trary despots, they are not even constitutional lawgivers; they are but constituted administrators of the law of the one Master, who is in heaven. The flock is to be managed according to the revealed will of the great, good, Proprietor-Shepherd, whose own the sheep are. The family is to be governed according to the distinctly declared mind of the one Father, who is in heaven.

But Christian elders, as well as those under their care, are to remember that they are *rulers* under him, that they must take their orders from him, that they are accountable to him, that the sheep are not to dictate to the shepherds, nor the children to the tutors and governors. If Christian elders seek to please even the members of the church in any other way than by pleasing them for their good, for edification, by declaring and executing the law of Christ, they will prove that they are not the servants of Christ but the servants of men. The authority of Christian elders, though subordinate and deputed, is real authority; so that, in the right discharge of their official duties, he that despiseth them despiseth not man but God. He that contemns the humblest subordinate magistrate, regularly appointed and acting within the limits of his delegated authority, is guilty of disobedience to the Supreme Power. Such is a short view of the duty of Christian elders, as shepherds of the flock, overseers of the family of God, as included under the two heads, instruction, and superintendence or government.

CHAP. III.—OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THESE DUTIES ARE TO BE PERFORMED.

Let us now, in the third place, turn our attention to the account which the Apostle gives of the manner in which these duties should be performed. In discharging their duties, Christian elders are not to act “by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples of

the flock.”¹ We shall consider shortly in their order, these characteristics of the right mode of performing the duties of the Christian eldership.

§ 1. “*Not by constraint, but willingly.*”

Christian elders are to shepherd the flock, and superintend the family of God, “not by constraint, but willingly.” Some have supposed that these words refer rather to the flock or family than to the shepherds or overseers; that they describe rather the means to be employed than the temper to be cherished by Christian elders; that they intimate that the flock of Christ are to be ruled, not by *force*, but by *persuasion*; that they are to be drawn, not driven. This is unquestionably truth, important truth; but it cannot be brought out of the Apostle’s words without using violence. The three double clauses, all of them, obviously refer to the state of the mind of the Christian elder in the discharge of his duty. Even some of those interpreters who have seen this clearly, have yet fallen into a slight misapprehension as to the precise meaning and reference of the words before us. From not noticing that these words are equally connected with both the figurative injunctions of the duties of the Christian elder, and from being more occupied with the sound than the sense of the phrase, “taking the oversight,” it has been common to consider these words as describing exclusively the temper in which the office of the eldership should be undertaken, not the disposition in which its duties should be habitually performed. It is obvious, however, that it refers to feed the flock of Christ, as well as to taking the oversight; and it is equally obvious, that the word rendered taking the oversight does not refer to a person’s entering on the eldership, though very applicable to

¹ “Dum pastores ad officium hortari vult, tria potissimum vitia notat, quæ plurimum obesse solent: pigritiam, scilicet, lucri captandi cupiditatem et licentiam dominandi. Primo vitio opponit alacritatem aut voluntarium studium: secundo liberalem affectum: tertio moderationem et modestiam qua seipsos in ordinem cogant.”—CALVIN.

such a person, but to persons who are elders; and might have been still more literally rendered, “superintending them;”¹ that is, not so much undertaking as exercising superintendence.

The passage has often been quoted to prove, that no man should be compelled by ecclesiastical authority to take office in the church generally, or to take office in a particular church; but its bearing on this subject, though important, is indirect. The meaning is, that a Christian elder should perform his duties, not reluctantly, as something that he is obliged to do, but cheerfully, as something that he delights to do; not as a task to a hard master that he must perform, but as an honourable and delightful service, which carries its reward in the satisfaction it affords. The more the Christian elder is constrained by a regard to the authority of Christ, a sense of his grace, and the love of the brotherhood, to the discharge of these duties, so much the better; but these are species of constraint that not only do not interfere with, but necessarily imply, willingness. It is true of duty generally, and eminently true of the duties of the Christian eldership, that they have no value in the estimation of God, and are little likely to be effectual for answering their object, if they do not proceed from a willing mind; if they are not, as the Apostle expresses it in the Epistle to Philemon, “not as it were of necessity, but willingly.” The duties of the eldership must be performed not “grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful” doer, as well as a cheerful “giver.”² A Christian elder, if he is what he should be, will be very thankful that God has given him a place in his house at all; and though sensible of the difficulties of his duties, and his unfitness for their right discharge, he will be still more grateful that he has given him office there. He will be disposed to adopt the Apostle’s words, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has enabled me, for that he counted me trustworthy, faithful,

¹ Επισκοπεύτης.

² Phil. 14. 2 Cor. ix. 7.

putting me into the ministry." And with the Psalmist, "What shall I render to the Lord for this benefit?" The spirit of the under shepherd should be that of the chief Shepherd, who, when called according to his covenant engagement to lay down his life for the sheep, was "not rebellious, neither turned away back," but said, "Lo, I come;" "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"¹ "There may be," as Archbishop Leighton says, "in a Christian elder, very great reluctance in engaging and adhering to the work, from a sense of the excellence of it, and his unfitness; and the deep apprehension of those high interests, the glory of God and the salvation of souls; and yet he enters and continues in it with this willingness of mind, with most single and earnest desires of doing all he can for God and the flock of God; only grieved that there is in him so little suitableness of heart, so little holiness and acquaintance with God for enabling him to it; but might he find that, he were satisfied; and in attendance upon that, goes on and waits, and is doing according to his little skill and strength, and cannot leave it; is constrained indeed, but all the constraint is love to Jesus, and for the sake of the souls He hath bought; a constraint far different from the constraint here discharged; yea, indeed, that very willingness which is opposed to that other constraint."

§ 2. *"Not for filthy lucre, but of a willing mind."*

Christian elders are to shepherd the flock, and superintend the family of God, not "from filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;" as well as "not from constraint, but willingly." The former clause, as we have just seen, is equivalent to not reluctantly, but cheerfully. This seems equivalent to, not in a self-interested, mercenary disposition, but in a disinterested spirit of gratitude to God and love to the brethren.

There is nothing wrong in a Christian elder, who devotes

¹ 1 Tim. i. 12. Isa. l. 5. Psal. xl. 7. Luke xii. 50.

his time and talents to the promotion of the good of the church over which he is placed, receiving, from the church's sense of justice and gratitude of his claims on them, and their obligations to him, temporal support. It is the command of the Apostle, "Let him who is taught, communicate to him that teacheth in all good things." It is the ordination of our Lord, "that they who preach the gospel should live on the gospel," just as "they who ministered at the altar lived by the altar." "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thrasheth in hope should be partakers of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?"¹ These passages seem to refer to the teaching elder, whose whole attention is to be directed to reading and meditation in private, and to "word and doctrine," both publicly, and from house to house; but it is plain that the elders who rule, if they are in circumstances in which they cannot devote the time necessary to the service of the church, without injustice to themselves and families, are equally entitled to support. This is implied in the injunction, "let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honour," obviously not excluding the honour of voluntary support, especially those who labour in word or in doctrine.

But while all this is true, it is not less true that the duties of Christian elders must be performed "not for filthy lucre." No man must convert the Christian eldership into a trade, in this way "making gain of godliness." Even with those

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 7-11.

elders who are entirely dependent on their labours, who have no source of income but the effect of the authority and grace of Christ on the minds, and consciences, and hearts of those to whom they minister, the principle must be, "freely we have received, freely we give." And wherever sacred duties are performed from a regard to worldly gain, in whatever form, whether in the form of fixed stipend, or occasional gifts, or increased respectability of character and worldly influence, leading to success in worldly business, there is fearful desecration. The Apostle obviously lays much stress on this point. In his Epistle to Timothy iii. 3, he says, a bishop must not be greedy of filthy lucre, nor covetous; and in his Epistle to Titus i. 7, he repeats the declaration. Such repeated warnings were not more than the case required. There has been too much of this in every age of the church, and the evil is not unknown even in our own times; nor is it confined within the limits of richly endowed churches, where its existence, if not less criminal than elsewhere, is less wonderful. It is a most deplorable thing when a regard to secular interest is allowed to interfere either with the declaration of Christian doctrine, or the administration of Christian discipline; when professed Christian teachers "prepare war against him that putteth not into their mouths," and "teach things that they ought not for filthy lucre's sake, through covetousness, with feigned words, making merchandise of their people, having hearts exercised to covetous practices, serving not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly;" and when the rulers of the church, from secular considerations, prefer one before another, and do any thing in the administration of discipline by partiality; when "the watchmen are greedy dogs that can never have enough, all looking to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter;" and when Malachi's question is an appropriate one, "Who is there among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle the fire on my altar for nought." Balaam's resolution should be formed and kept, not only as it was by him in the letter, but as it was

not by him, in the spirit. "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more." Yet it is very delightful to perceive that so many of our ministers are men who, with the same talents, and education, and effort, might have secured for themselves far higher secular advantages than they possess, or ever can expect to possess, as Christian elders; and the disinterestedness of many of our Christian elders who rule, but do not labour in word and doctrine, in not only cheerfully giving their unpaid, and often ill-estimated labour, to the churches, but, in addition, being patterns to the believers in liberally giving of their substance to promote the support and extension of the cause of Christ, makes it very evident that they shepherd the flock, they superintend the family of God, "not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." The Christian elder, when he becomes old and grey-headed, should be able to say with Samuel, "Behold, here I am; witness against me before the Lord; whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded?" or with Paul, "I have coveted no man's silver or gold; I seek not yours, but you."¹

Disinterestedness, in opposition to mercenariness, should characterise the labours of the Christian elder. Regard to the Divine glory, gratitude for the Divine grace, love to the Saviour who died, and to those for whom he died, eager desire that his name may not be blasphemed, through the inconsistent conduct of those who are called by it, and that it may be glorified in the holiness and happiness of his blood-bought heritage, and in bringing down the people in subjection to him, making them willing in the day of his power; these are the principles which should preside in the mind and heart of the Christian elder, and make him alert and cheerful in all the duties, however burdensome, of his official calling; producing a forwardness of mind far superior to what the stimulus of covetousness can create. Yes, as the good

¹ Numb. xxii. 18. 1 Sam. xii. 3. Acts xx. 33.

Archbishop says, "It is love, much love, which gives much unwearied care, and much skill in this charge. How sweet is it to him that loves to bestow himself, 'to spend and be spent,' upon his service whom he loves! Jacob, in the same kind of service, endured all, and found it light by reason of love, the cold of the nights and the heat of the days seven years for his Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days, because he loved her. Love is the great endowment of a shepherd of Christ's flock. He says not to Peter, art thou wise, or learned, or eloquent? but lovest thou me? lovest thou me? lovest thou me? Art thou of a ready mind? Feed my sheep: feed my lambs."

§ 3. *Not as lords of God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.*

Christian elders are to shepherd the flock, and oversee the children of God, "not as lords of God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." These duties are to be performed not in a proud overbearing spirit. They are duties of *rule*, and therefore there is a temptation to pride in performing them. But the elders are to remember that, though they are rulers in, they are not lords over, the family of God. The Son alone is lord over his own house. We proclaim not ourselves lords, says the Apostle Paul; "we preach Jesus *the* Lord," the only Lord, the One Master and Proprietor. There were rulers in Israel; but Jehovah alone, in the highest sense of the word, was Israel's king. The soil was his, and so were the people. Of the spiritual Israel, Jehovah-Jesus is the proprietor and lord. He is Lord of all: he is our Lord, and we are all brethren. For the good of the whole, some of the brethren are called by him to rule under him, to administer his laws; but this lays no foundation for claiming to be lords of their faith. "The bride is the bridegroom's;" the church is the Lord's. The church does not belong to the elders, but the elders to the church. "All things are *yours*, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Diotrephes, who loved the pre-

eminence, is the beacon, not the model, for Christian elders.

The Christian elder should, even when he must "come with a rod," as but too often is necessary, must come "in love, and in the spirit of meekness." How beautifully did Paul, though in authority, and success, and gifts, "not behind the very chiefest of the Apostles," exemplify his beloved brother Peter's precept? He did not conduct himself as a lord over God's heritage. He disowned all claim to personal lordship over their faith. He sought not glory, but when he might have used authority as an Apostle of Christ, was gentle among the disciples, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. And the servant of the Lord in every age must not be overbearing and ambitious: "he must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient; in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves." He must never forget the words of the Master, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."¹

Instead of acting as if they were lords of God's heritage, Christian elders are to perform their duties "as ensamples to the flock." In their careful discharge of their duty to those under their care, they are to teach them by example to perform the duties which they owe them and their Lord. By being dutiful to their people, they are to teach their people to be dutiful to them. By being obedient to Christ, they are to teach them to be obedient to him. And it deserves notice, that all the duties Christian elders are called on officially to discharge, are duties which the Christian brethren are substantially called on to perform. They are to "exhort

¹ Matt. xx. 25-28. Luke xxii. 25, 26. *Vide* note A.

one another daily while it is called to-day ;” they are all of them to “look diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God.” And the graces, which are required in the Christian life, are just those which must be manifested in the right discharge of pastoral duty.¹

A Christian elder cannot neglect duty, cannot commit sin of any kind, without doing more harm than a common church member ; and no kind of neglect or fault is likely to exercise a more malignant influence, than those which refer to official obligations. The Christian elder, therefore, should seek to be “an example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity ; showing himself a pattern of good works.” What a blessed influence is the holy character and conduct of Christian elders calculated to diffuse through the church ! In certain cases, they should readily wave undoubted rights, that they may be the better able to give a needed example. They should follow Paul : “Yourselves know,” says he, to the Thessalonians, “how ye ought to follow us : for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you ; neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought ; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you : not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.”² How happy is it when they can say, “We beseech you be followers of us as dear children ; be followers of us even as we also are of Christ !” After a Christian elder has said to those under his care, “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things,” what a powerful enforcement is it to the exhortation, when the elo-

¹ “Ea debet esse Pastoris vita ut non solum quicquid loquitur, sed etiam quicquid agit sit auditorum doctrina.”—GERHARD. “Monstruosa res est gradus summus et animus infimus : sedes prima et vita ima ; lingua magniloqua et vita otiosa ; sermo multus et fructus nullus ; vultus gravis et actus levis ; ingens autoritas et nutans stabilitas.”—BERNHARD.

² Acts xx. 34, 35. 2 Thess. iii. 7.

quence of a holy example, more persuasive than words, is felt in the heart of every hearer, saying, "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you!"

The two parts of the clause under remark throw light on each other. The elder who lords it over his brethren, is not, cannot be, "an *ensample*" to the flock. He is the very reverse of an ensample. He exemplifies the temper which they ought most carefully to avoid; and, on the other hand, if the elder acts as an ensample to the flock, he cannot lord it over them. The domineering elder cannot be an exemplary elder, and the exemplary elder cannot be a domineering elder. Nothing sits so gracefully on the ruler in the Christian church as kind condescension. Nothing is more unbecoming in him than overbearing haughtiness. The Master is the great model. "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If Christian elders know these things, happy will it be for themselves and for the churches if they do them."¹

Such is the temper in which the duties of Christian elders should be performed, not reluctantly but cheerfully, not mercenarily but disinterestedly, from love to God and love to the brethren; not ambitiously to display or establish superiority and rule; not to glorify themselves, but to edify the brethren; but humbly, for the purpose of setting an example of Christian obedience.²

CHAP. IV.—OF THE MOTIVES TO THESE DUTIES.

It still remains for us on this part of our subject to attend

John xiii. 13-17.

¹ "Tres sunt ministeri ecclesiastici pestes αἰγρία, ἀσχετοσύνη et φιλοπρωτία."
—GERHARD.

to the motives by which the Apostle urges Christian elders to discharge their duties in this manner. These motives are derived from considerations referring personally to the Apostle—"I exhort you; I who am a fellow-elder, a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed;" from considerations referring to the church—it is "the flock of God," "God's heritage;" and from considerations referring to the office-bearers themselves—if they perform their duties in this way, "when the chief Shepherd appears, they shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not." Let us shortly endeavour to bring out the force of the motives arising from these three sources.

§ 1.—*Motives suggested by the Apostle's reference to himself.*

(1.) *He was also an elder.*

And first let us consider the motives suggested by the Apostle's reference to himself. "The elders who are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory which shall be revealed." I exhort, says Peter; and who was he? "An Apostle of Jesus Christ," one of those so specially commissioned by Christ Jesus to act the part of an ambassador in his room, who is the great ambassador from God; as that when they exhorted it was "as though God did beseech men" by them; to whom he had said, "As the Father hath sent me, so I send you; whatsoever ye bind on earth is bound in heaven; whatsoever ye loose on earth is loosed in heaven. He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he who despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me;" to whom the Son of Man, on sitting down on the throne of his glory, gave twelve thrones, on which they should sit and judge, rule the twelve tribes of the spiritual Israel; who, along with the inspired prophets, are the foundation on which the church is built, and whose names are represented in the Apocalypse as engraved on the jewelled

foundations of the New Jerusalem. An exhortation from such a quarter was equivalent to a command. He that rejected the Apostles, "rejected not men, but God, who had given them his Spirit;" while they spoke as Apostles, Christ, and God in Christ, spoke by them. An apostolical exhortation is equivalent to a Divine command.¹

The Apostle, though possessed of this authority, made no unnecessary display of it. It was generally acknowledged by the churches; and though they sometimes found it necessary to "command," as well as to exhort, in the name of the Lord Jesus, yet for the most part, "though they might be much bold in Christ" to enjoin that which was convenient, they "rather, for love's sake, beseeched" those whom they addressed. The injunction lost none of its intrinsic authority from the form it took; and, while more agreeable to him who gave, was not likely to be less influential on those to whom it was given. Peter not only uses the word exhort instead of command, but, instead of using the official appellation which was peculiar to the highest order of church officers, apostle, he employs that of elder, which in its most general acceptation includes all church rulers. He does not take the name which distinguishes him from, but that which identifies him with, those whom he addresses.

Peter speaks of "the wisdom given to his beloved brother Paul;" and it is plain he himself had been made partaker of the same spirit of wisdom and of love. "I am," says the venerable Apostle, 'I am a co-presbyter, a fellow-elder. I know what it is to have a charge in the house of God. I have felt the responsibilities rising out of the command to feed the sheep, to feed the lambs of the great, good Shepherd. I know the duties of the Christian pastor; I know his difficulties; I know his temptations; I know his joys; I know his sorrows. I know the heart of the Christian elder.

¹ 2 Cor. v. 20. Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18. Matt. x. 40. John xiii. 20. Matt. xix. 28. Eph. ii. 20. Rev. xxi. 14.

The exhortation comes from one who can, who does, thoroughly sympathize with you.’¹

The kindly condescending address of the Apostle was calculated to give additional force to his exhortation, and its peculiar force is surely intended to teach elders, especially old elders, men who have been long in office in God’s church, to use the influence which, if they have in any measure rightly discharged their duty, they must have acquired, in exhorting their fellow-elders, especially those younger than themselves, to diligence and fidelity in the duties of their common offices. “The duty of mutual exhorting, which lies on each Christian to another, is little known amongst the greater part; but surely pastors should be, as in other duties so in this, eminent and exemplary in their intercourse and converse, saying often one to another, ‘Oh, let us remember to what we are called, to how high and heavy a charge! to what holiness and diligence! How great the hazard of our miscarriage, and how great the reward of our fidelity! whetting and sharpening one another by those weighty and holy considerations. It is peculiarly becoming in old Christian elders to say to their young brethren, especially when the exhortation is enforced by a protracted course of faithful services to Christ and his church,’ ‘Take heed to the ministry which ye have received of the Lord, that ye fulfil it.’ Such exhortations given in the right spirit seldom fail of doing good.”

(2.) *He was a witness of the sufferings of Christ.*

To give further weight to his exhortation, the Apostle not only calls himself a fellow-elder, but “a witness of the sufferings of Christ.” “The sufferings of Christ,” of which the ancient prophets are in the first chapter (v. 11) represented as witnesses of, as testifying about, are not, as I endeavoured to show when explaining that part of the epistle, the personal

¹ “Est autem eximia modestia, quod se *εὐαγγελιστής*, ipse nominat, quem caput et principem apostolorum postea confinxerunt, et vicedeum adeo.”—SEMLER.

sufferings of our Lord, but the "sufferings until Christ," as the words literally signify, "the sufferings of the present time," to which for a season it is needful that Christians be exposed, as contrasted with the glory which is to follow, the salvation laid up in heaven, the grace to be brought to Christians at the revelation of our Lord Jesus. And some have supposed that the phrase "sufferings of Christ" have the same meaning here, and that the Apostle expresses the same sentiment as the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians, when he says, "We told you before that we should suffer tribulation." There can be no doubt that Peter as well as Paul, when confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, did testify, that "through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom."¹ We find him doing so in this epistle, and this was in itself a good reason why he should exhort the office-bearers to a conscientious performance of their duties, for that, important at all times, becomes doubly so in a time of trial. But the expression here is not the same as that in the first chapter, and seems varied to show that it refers to Christ's personal sufferings, and not to the sufferings of his body, the church, till he comes.

Of these sufferings Peter was "a witness." These words may signify that the sufferings of Christ were a principal subject of Peter's testimony as an Apostle. The apostles, after they received power through the Holy Ghost coming upon them, were, according to their Master's appointment and prediction, "witnesses unto him both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." And wherever they went the cross was the great theme of their testimony. The Messiah they proclaimed was the crucified Messiah, "a stumbling-block to the Jews, foolishness to the Greeks; but to the called, whether Jew or Greek, the power of God, the wisdom of God." Peter, judging of his ministry from his discourses recorded in the Acts of

¹ Acts xiv. 22.

the Apostles and in this epistle, had, as well as Paul, “determined to know nothing among his converts but Jesus Christ and him crucified.” He too could say, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world.”¹

It appears to me, however, more natural to understand the words, “a witness of the sufferings of Jesus Christ,” in their most obvious sense as equivalent to, I saw Jesus Christ suffer. It is as if he had said, ‘He who addresses you, and calls on you to be faithful to Christ, and to the church purchased by his blood, knows well how strong are his claims on you, how strong is his regard for them. With these eyes I have seen the Eternal Word, the Lord of glory, a poor, destitute, afflicted, tormented, despised, dying, dead man. I heard his groans in Gethsemane. I saw his sweat, as it were great drops of blood, falling to the ground. I saw him betrayed by one of his disciples, Judas. I saw him deserted by them all. I saw him insulted and abused before the high priest. I saw how deeply he felt, and how tenderly he forgave my base denial of him.’ And as we can scarcely persuade ourselves that Peter and the other apostles were not witnesses of the last scene of suffering, it is as if he said, ‘I saw him affixed, like a felonious slave, to the cross. I heard the wail of agony, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!” I heard, though I then understood not, the mysterious parting cry, “It is finished.” Having witnessed all this, is it wonderful that His words who thus suffered for me, for you, for the flock committed to our care, that his words, Lovest thou me? feed my lambs; Lovest thou me? feed my sheep; Lovest thou me? feed my sheep,—should be continually sounding in my ears; continually weighing on my heart, and that I should with deep earnestness exhort you to do that which he so impressively commanded me to do?’

“These, indeed, are things that give great weight to a man’s words, make them powerful and pressing, ‘a witness of the sufferings of Christ.’ The apostles had a singular

¹ 1 Cor. i. 23. Gal. vi. 14.

advantage in this that they were eye-witnesses ;¹ and Paul, who wanted that, had it supplied by a vision of Christ at his conversion. But certainly a spiritual view of Christ crucified is generally, I will not say absolutely, necessary to make a minister of Christ. It is certainly very requisite for the due witnessing of him, so to preach the gospel as one ‘before whose eyes Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth crucified.’ Men commonly read and hear, and may possibly preach of the sufferings of Christ as a common story, and in that way it may a little move a man and wring tears from his eyes ; but faith hath another kind of sight of them, and so works another kind of affection. By the eye of faith to see the only begotten Son of God, as stricken and smitten of God, bearing our sorrows and wounded for our transgressions ; Jesus Christ, the righteous, reckoned among the unrighteous and malefactors ; to see him stript naked, and scourged, and buffeted, and reviled, and dying, and all for us ; this is the thing that will bind upon us most strongly all the duties of Christianity, and of our callings ; and best enable us according to our callings to bind them upon others.”²

(3.) *He was a partaker of the glory to be revealed.*

But still farther to add cogency to his exhortation, the Apostle styles himself “a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.” The glory here spoken of is obviously “the glory of Christ,” a state of dignity and happiness contrasted with his suffering state. ‘I am not only a witness of his sufferings, but a partaker of his glory, which is to be revealed.’ Some have supposed that in these words there is a reference either to our Lord’s transfiguration, or to his resurrection state, as if Peter had said, ‘I witnessed and shared of his sufferings, and I have witnessed and shared too of his glory. I was “with him in the Holy Mount, when he received from God the Father honour and glory.” I, though fearing, entered with him into the cloud of glory, from the midst of which came the voice, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am

¹ *Autentici.*

² Leighton.

well pleased." And I too companied with him after his resurrection, when God had "raised him from the dead, and given him glory." I am one of those on whom he breathed and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost;" and of whom he also said, "The glory thou hast given me I have given them." That glory is as yet in this state veiled. It is "hid with Christ in God," but it will by and by be manifested.¹

It seems to me more natural to consider the glory here referred to as the glory of Christ in the celestial state. That glory at present is concealed, and shall continue so till the close of the present state of things. The glories of the holy of holies are hidden from this outer court of the temple by the veil of these visible heavens, through which our Lord has passed. But this veil will by and by be rent asunder, and all the splendours of the inner sanctuary burst on the sight of an amazed world. "Christ, the life of his people, shall appear," be manifested to be what he is, and they his people shall be manifested with him in glory. The day of his manifestation as the Son of God shall be the day of their manifestation as the sons of God. He will be "glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe;" and they will be glorified in him, admired in him.² His glories will be displayed; and it will be made to appear that the glory his Father has given him he has given his people.

Of this participation in the revealed glories of Christ, Peter was so persuaded in reference to himself, that he speaks of himself as already a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Having the spirit of faith he was confident, "knowing that he that raised up the Lord Jesus would also raise up him by Jesus," and that he should be for ever "with him where he is," beholding and sharing his glory, so far as the thing is possible, being "glorified together with him."³ But the words are so chosen as naturally enough, in addition to this thought, that he should be a partaker of the glory of Christ at the time of its revelation, to

¹ 2 Pet. i. 16-18. John xvii. 22.

² Col. iii. 4. 2 Thess. i. 10.

³ 2 Cor. iv. 14. John xvii. 24. Rom. viii. 17.

convey the idea that even now, amid all the imperfections and sorrows of the present state, Peter considered himself as a partaker of the glory of Christ ; that glory now concealed, but one day to be manifested. He considered himself as “planted together with Christ,” not only “in the likeness of his death,” but also “in the likeness of his resurrection ;” as not only having fellowship with him in his death, but also in his life, “sitting with him, reigning with him in the heavenly places ;”¹ already a partaker, though in far inferior measure, of that holiness and happiness, in the enjoyment of the divine favour and conformity to the divine image, in the perfection of which Christ’s glory consists. Peter was, and every Christian in the measure of his faith is, thus even here “a partaker of the glory which is to be revealed.”

The bearing of this statement, as a motive on the Apostle’s exhortation, is manifest when you look forward to its close, where he points to the crown of glory, which, when the Chief Shepherd comes, that is, at the time of the revelation of his glory, shall be conferred on the faithful under-shepherds. The exhortation of a man, who, under the influence of the spirit of faith, believes, and therefore speaks, and who, when speaking of the future rewards of the faithful minister, speaks of something of which he has already the earnest, and of the full enjoyment of which he is completely assured, is plainly fitted to be peculiarly impressive and persuasive. It is as if he had said, “I speak what I do know. I testify what I have seen.”

§ 2. *Motives from considerations referring to the church.*

Let us now look at the motives derived from considerations referring to the church. Feed the church ; it is the flock of God. Superintend the church ; it is the heritage of God.

(1.) *It is the flock of God.*

The church is the flock of God, and every true member of it is one of his sheep. This is one of the figurative expres-

¹ Rom. vi. 5. Eph. ii. 6.

sions by which Jehovah's peculiar property in, and care for, ancient Israel is often expressed. "Ye are my flock; the flock of my pasture are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God."¹ Like most expressions of the kind, it is employed in an extended and elevated sense to describe the peculiar relation in which the true spiritual church stands to God. They are his peculiar property, separated from the rest of mankind, saved from destruction by the good Shepherd laying down his life for them; protected by his peculiar providence, and blessed with the tokens of his special love. The good Shepherd, who laid down his life to save them from destruction, took it again to complete their salvation: "He gathers the lambs in his arms, he carries them in his bosom;" "He feeds them, and causes them to lie down. He seeks that which was lost, and brings again that which was driven away; and binds that which is broken, and strengthens that which is sick." Hear what he himself says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and none can pluck them out of my Father's hand."² Should not we count it a great honour, and feel it a most responsible trust, to have those who stand in so close a relation to God, in whom he takes so peculiar an interest, committed to our care? Should we not care for those for whom He cares? Should we not watch for those for whom his Son died?

(2.) *It is God's heritage.*

Substantially the same ideas with regard to the church are suggested by its being termed God's heritage. The term here used has a reference to the manner in which the Israelites obtained their possessions, which were heritages transmitted from generation to generation. It is borrowed from the fact that these possessions were originally fixed by lot, so that lot and possession are often, in Scripture, convertible terms. Like the former figure, it is often used to

¹ Ezek. xxxiv. 31.

² Isa. xl. 11. Ezek. xxxiv. 11-14. John x. 28.

express Jehovah's peculiar relation to Israel, "The Lord's portion is his people; Israel is the lot of his inheritance;"¹ and like it, too, it is transferred to the spiritual church under the new economy. Christians are called "the purchased possession," the peculiar property of God, "the chosen generation, the holy nation, the peculiar people."² To be employed to take care of his ancient people was a great honour. To be the king of Israel was greater honour than to be king of Egypt, Assyria, or Babylon. How far above all Pagan legislators stands Moses the servant of the Lord! How low the rank of heathen sages compared with that of Hebrew prophets! The most honourable and responsible situation man can occupy, is that of a teacher and ruler in that spiritual family of which God is the head, Jesus Christ is the elder brother, and holy angels the willing ministers. Should not God's most valued property be well cared for? Should not the education of his children be well attended to? Is there not great honour involved in the charge being entrusted to us? Must there not be high responsibility incurred by our undertaking it? Such seems the force of the motives derived from a reference to the church.

It is but right to remark, before leaving this particular, that the precise meaning of the expression, rendered "God's heritage," is somewhat doubtful. You will observe the word *God's* is in italics, which, as you know, indicates that there is no term answering to it in the original. The word is in the plural, the lots or possessions. Not lording it over "the lots."^b The term lot or possession, in the singular, is applied to the church, as the lot or possession of Jehovah; but nowhere else in the plural. This has led some to suppose that it refers to the possessions, the property, of the church; not treating the church property, as if it were their own, as if they were the proprietors of it. There is no reason to think that at this early period the churches had any thing like paid property; and there is no proper contrast in

¹ Deut. xxxii. 9.² Eph. i. 18. 1 Pet. ii. 9.^b See note B.

this case between the two obviously antithetic clauses of the sentence. It is a much more probable opinion that considers the lots or possessions as referring to the separate flocks of different elders or elderships. Not lording it over the (or their) lots or possessions, the flocks allotted to them by the great Shepherd, but showing them an example. In this case, the motive folded up in the phrase is, You have had a specific work assigned you by the great Shepherd. Each has his appointed sphere of labour. Let the labourers see that their own vineyard be well kept, and their own flock be well shepherded. Yet a little while, and the great Husbandman will take account of his servants, and then wo to the unprofitable, double wo to the unfaithful servant.

§ 3. *Motives from considerations referring to the Office-bearers themselves.*

It only remains now that we attend a little to the motives derived from a reference to the office-bearers themselves. The words of the Apostle express much ; they suggest more. They describe the reward of the faithful Christian elder ; they dimly shadow forth the punishment of the unfaithful Christian elder.

(1.) *The reward of the faithful Christian Elder.*

The words describe the reward of the faithful Christian elder : "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, he shall receive a crown of glory, which fadeth not away." Jesus Christ is the *chief* Shepherd ; he is *the* Shepherd of the sheep, the good Shepherd, the great Shepherd, the proprietor Shepherd, whose own the sheep are ; the Shepherd of the shepherds as well as of the sheep. He is even now really present in his church. The faithful Witness did not lie when he said, "Lo, I am with you alway." "Where two or three are met in my name, I am in the midst of them."¹

His presence, however, is spiritual, not bodily. The heavens have received him, and we see him no more. But

¹ Matt. xxviii. 20 ; xviii. 20.

when he disappeared, the most explicit declarations were given that he should re-appear. "I will come again," said he himself; "and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." "This same Jesus," said the angels to the apostles, when they stood gazing up towards heaven, in the clouds of which their Lord had just disappeared, "This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."¹ This re-appearance, which is to be a glorious manifestation of what he is, both essentially and officially, a revelation of his glory, is a leading subject of the apostolic testimony, and has been all along the great object of the church's hope. Their "blessed hope" is, and has all along been, "the glorious appearing of Him who is the great God and their Saviour."² The day of his coming is to be the day of their "gathering together to him."

When He shall come, he shall come in his character of the chief Shepherd, to collect his flock together, and to conduct them all in a body into the heavenly fold. One purpose of his coming shall be to take account of his under shepherds, and to render to them according to their work. To the faithful, laborious servant, who has affectionately and wisely shepherded and superintended, fed and guided the flock committed to him, not grudgingly, but cheerfully; not mercenarily, but disinterestedly; not ambitiously, seeking to be a lord, but humbly, striving to be an ensample; "he will then give a crown of glory which shall never fade."

The language is figurative, but the meaning is plain. He will visibly reward his faithful services, by bestowing on him a large measure of the highest kinds of happiness and honour of which his nature is capable; blessings which shall endure for ever, and for ever retain undiminished their power to satisfy their possessors. In what the peculiarity of the rewards of the faithful Christian elder shall consist, we can form but inadequate and indistinct ideas. There is much, however, to lead us to believe, that a portion, and pro-

¹ Acts i. 10, 11.² Tit. ii. 13.

bably no small portion of it, is to consist in witnessing the holy happiness of those to whose spiritual interests he ministered on earth; and to know most certainly, that to his labours and instrumentality their happiness has been owing. Such is the view which the Apostle's words naturally lead us to take, when he calls the Philippian Christians his "joy and his crown;" and when to the Thessalonians he says, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and our joy."¹

The Christian pastor shall, according to his measure, be admitted into the joy of his Lord, when he sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. This is an exceeding great, and a peculiarly appropriate reward; a reward which will be enjoyed just in proportion as the individual Christian pastor has been filled with the spirit of his office, and discharged its duties. What a high, what a holy satisfaction to know, that we have efficiently co-operated towards the accomplishment of the favoured purpose of Deity, to reconcile all things to himself by Jesus Christ; that we have been the means of saving souls from death, of covering multitudes of sins, of increasing the joys of angels, of ministering to the satisfaction of Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood! What a reward!

To borrow the words of the holy Leighton, "It is a crown of glory, pure, unmixed glory, without any ingrency of pride or sinful vanity, or any danger of it; and a crown that fadeth not, formed of such flowers that wither not; not a temporary garland of faded flowers, as all here are. Though made of flowers growing in a rich valley, their glorious beauty is fading; but this is fresh, and in perfect lustre, to all eternity. May they not well trample on base gain, and vain applause, that have this crown to look to? Joys of royal pomp, how soon do they vanish as a dream? But this day begins a triumph and a feast, that shall never

¹ Phil. iv. i. 1 Thess. ii. 19.

either end or be wearied of. All things here, even the choicest pleasures, cloy, but satisfy not. Those above shall always satisfy, but never cloy. What is to be refused in the way to this crown? All labour for it is sweet. And what is there here to be desired to stay our hearts, that we should not most willingly let go, to rest from our labours, and receive our crown? Was ever any man sad that the day of his coronation drew nigh? In that day when he on whose head are many crowns, shall bestow many crowns, there will be no envy, no jealousies; all kings, each having his own crown, and each rejoicing in the glory of another, and all in His, who that day shall be all in all."

(2.) *The doom of the unfaithful Christian elder.*

These words of the Apostle, while they describe the final destiny of the faithful Christian pastor, naturally suggest the awful truth respecting the Christian elder who has not fed the flock of God, who has not superintended aright his heritage. What is to become of him who has done his work by constraint, not willingly, for filthy lucre, not of a willing mind, who has lorded it over God's heritage, and has not been an ensample to the flock; shall he be crowned? No; he has not "striven," or, at any rate, "not striven lawfully." The doom of the unprofitable, the doom of the unfaithful, servant will be his. Expelled from the family of God, he will be cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. His portion is with the hypocrites, a class peculiarly hateful to him who desires truth in the inward part, with the perfidious, who have broken their engagements both to God and to man. And it is his fit place; for the honour of God, the cause of truth, the interests of souls, were put into his hands; he accepted the trust, and basely betrayed them all. In the prison of hell, with "the basest, the lowermost, the most dejected, most underfoot and down-trodden vassals of perdition,"¹ must he have his everlasting abode? "This pertaineth

¹ Milton.

to him as the portion of his cup." What Christian elder can think of these things, can realize them to his mind, without having new nerve given to his resolution to be "faithful to him who has appointed him;" "faithful to death," that he may "obtain the crown of life," and escape the brand of everlasting shame and contempt; that he may be greeted with the invitation, "Well done, good and faithful servant," come up hither; instead of meeting the heart-withering denunciation, "Depart, depart, I never knew you." You called me, Lord; but I never considered you as my servant, 'for I knew you were not.'

Thus have I brought to a close my illustrations of the first part of this paragraph, that part of it which refers to the duties of the office-bearers of the Christian church to those committed to their care; but ere proceeding farther, I would press on my own mind, and on the minds of my brethren in the eldership in this congregation, the solemn considerations which, in the illustration of this passage of Scripture, have been placed before us. Let us remember, that this word of exhortation is as really addressed to us, as it was to those to whom the Epistle was originally written. Let us humble ourselves, under the consciousness how very imperfectly we have discharged the inappreciably important duties of our most responsible situation. Let us cast ourselves on our Master's kindness, for the forgiveness of all that has been wanting and wrong in our official conduct; and while in our inmost hearts saying, "Who is sufficient for these things?" let us, undiscouraged though not unwarned by our former failures, cherish an evergrowing resoluteness of determination, by his grace, to be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of our Lord, assured that our labours shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Holy brethren, partakers of this high vocation, elders, suffer the words of exhortation from one who also is an elder. They shall be in the words of the holy apostles of our common Lord: "I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that ye take heed to yourselves,

and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers. Hold the mystery of faith in a pure conscience. Be examples to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity. Let no man despise you. O men of God, flee pride, strife, evil surmisings, perverse disputings, and that love of money which is the root of all evil. Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life. Hold fast the form of sound words. Hold fast what you have attained; let no man take your crown. I give you charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, That ye observe these things, without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, neither can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.”¹

II. OF THE DUTIES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TO THEIR OFFICE-BEARERS.

I go on now to call your attention to the view which the text gives us of the duties of the members of Christian churches towards their office-bearers. This is contained in the first clause of the fifth verse, “Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder.” Before proceeding farther, however, it will be proper that I endeavour to satisfy you that these words are, indeed, an injunction of the duties of church members to their office-bearers, and not, as many

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 1. Acts. xx. 28. 1 Tim. i. 19; iii. 9; iv. 12. Tit. ii. 15. 1 Tim. vi. 11, 12. 2 Tim. i. 13. Rev. iii. 11. 1 Tim. vi. 13-16.

have supposed, of the duties of the young to the aged. Were we merely looking at the words, without taking into consideration the connexion in which they are introduced, this last mode of viewing them would probably be that which would first occur to every reader; but it requires only a little reflection to see two things: first, that the connexion by no means leads us to expect here an injunction of the duties of the young to the aged, and that the language by no means obliges us thus to understand it; and, secondly, that the connexion does lead us to expect an injunction of the duties of the private members of the church, as contradistinguished from the office-bearers; and, while there is nothing in the language which is inconsistent with this mode of interpretation, there is something which cannot be satisfactorily explained on any other supposition.

There can be no doubt that the first four verses of the chapter refer to the duties of Christian office-bearers; and as little, that the injunction in the fifth verse has a close connexion with the injunctions contained in these verses, a connexion intimated by the connective particle “likewise;”¹ a word which seems to intimate that the duties enjoined are correlate, or at any rate refer, belong, to the same general family of duties. In enjoining domestic duties, after stating the duties of servants, the Apostle says, “*Likewise*, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands;” and after stating the duties of wives, he says, “*Likewise*, ye husbands, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”² The word certainly leads you to expect the injunction of some kindred, some ecclesiastical duty, not the injunction of a duty belonging to an entirely different class.

¹ *Ὁμοίως* manifeste ostendit eosdem hic significari presbyteros: sicut antea Petrus de presbyterorum erga suas oves, sic nunc de ovium erga suos *presbyteros* officio disserit: quamobrem etiam recte Syrus interpres addidit affixum *restris*.—BEZA.

² 1 Pet. iii. 1, 7.

It is the ordinary practice of the Apostles, a practice plainly dictated by the proprieties of the case, to enjoin the duties rising out of mutual relations in succession; thus, "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands; husbands, love your wives." "Children, obey your parents; fathers, provoke not your children to anger." "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters; masters, do the same thing to them."¹ When, then, we meet with an injunction to elders to do their duty to a certain class clearly defined, and then find a certain class, not quite so clearly defined, called on to do their duty to elders, we naturally conclude that the objects of the first exhortations are the subjects of the second, and not some other class altogether.

Had the office-bearers been represented as spiritual fathers, and had the injunction run thus, 'Fathers in Christ carefully superintend and instruct the family of God committed to your care;' and been followed by the command, 'Likewise, ye children, be submissive to the fathers;' would not every one at once see that, in the latter clause, it was not the duty of children to their parents that was enjoined, but that of spiritual children to their spiritual fathers—in other words, of the members of the church to the office-bearers of the church?

It seems very unnatural, without a strong reason, to suppose the elders of the fifth verse a very different class of men from the elders of the first verse;² and, if they are the same class, it seems strange that young persons alone should be called on to perform to them a duty which is owing to them by all to whom they stand in official relation. Besides, had the Apostle meant to enjoin the duties of the young to the old, he would have used some other word for the old than that which he has just used to express office. Still further, the duty enjoined is one due to all official elders, from their office; and not due to any old man, merely from his age. It is not submission, but respect, that is due from

¹ Eph. v. 22, 25; vi. 1, 4, 5, 9. Col. iii. 18-22; iv. 1.

² Πατέρες.

the young to the old. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord."¹

We consider ourselves, then, as not only warranted, but shut up to interpret "the younger," or the juniors here, as a general name for the ordinary church members, as contradistinguished from their elders, in the same way as they are termed sheep, or a flock, when their office-bearers are termed shepherds; scholars, or disciples, when they are termed teachers; and as John the elder speaks of his converts as his children, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."² I am not aware of the designation "younger" being used in any other part of the New Testament in the sense which it seems to bear here, though there is a passage where it is employed in a somewhat analogous way: "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve."³

'That the younger here are those who stand in some relation to the presbyters or elders just mentioned, is so evident, and its reference to the young in age is so unnatural,^c that we find a number of commentators supposing that the term refers to the six inferior orders of clergy,⁴ as they were called, after the simplicity of the primitive Christian polity was departed from; and that submission referred to their duties to the bishops. The use of such an expression for church members was natural in the primitive times, when their official elders were generally, not young men, certainly not young Christians; it being matter of statute that the elders should not be novices, but tried men, old disciples; so that the great body of the church members were both naturally and spiritually their juniors. Indeed still, in ordinary cases, the great body of the members of a church are younger than their elders.

On the supposition that the younger, the juniors, are the

¹ Lev. xix. 32.

² 3 John 4.

³ Luke xxii. 26.

^c See note C.

⁴ Salmero.

private members of the church, the whole passage has a character of close connexion and complete consistency. We have first the duties of the office-bearers; then the duty of the private members of the church to their office-bearers; and then the duty of all connected with the church, whether officers or private members, clearly stated and powerfully enforced. The duties enjoined are just the duties belonging to those who respectively occupy those ecclesiastical relations. On the other supposition, all is disjointed. An injunction of the duties of Christian pastors is followed by an injunction of the duties of the young to the old; and this followed by an injunction of the duty which every man owes to every man; and the duties enjoined in the two last cases are not those which we expect; for, though the young are bound to respect the aged, they are not bound to submit to them; and, though every man is to be kind and just to every other man, every man is not bound to be subject to every man; though there is an important sense, as we will by and by see, in which every Christian man should be subject to every other Christian man; every church member to every other church member. Even Leighton, who follows the common mode of interpretation, acknowledges that the words have "some aspect to the relation of those that are under the discipline and government of the elders." The good archbishop was forgetful of the wise saying of Dr Owen: "If Scripture has more meanings than one, it has no meaning at all." If the younger means the members of the church, it cannot mean the young properly so called.

Having thus ascertained that the injunction before us is an injunction to church members to perform their duty to their office-bearers, let us proceed now to inquire into the meaning of the injunction. What is the duty of church members to their office-bearers, as here described? The duty here enjoined is substantially the same as that enjoined by the Apostle Paul, in his Epistles to the Thessalonians and Hebrews. "We beseech you, brethren, to know, or acknowledge, them which labour among you, and are over

you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they who must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."¹

It is quite plain, from these passages, that obedience and submission are required from church members to their office-bearers. It is unhappily too certain, that much mischief has been done, and much good prevented by church officers assuming a power and authority that do not belong to them, but to the one Lord, and encroaching on the liberties which every Christian possesses in unalienable right, by virtue of the gift of this one Lord; and by church members impiously permitting such an usurpation, and tamely submitting to such encroachments on their privileges. But it is just as unhappily notorious, that much mischief has been done, and much good prevented in the Christian church, by anarchy as well as tyranny; by church members refusing to obey them that are over them in the Lord, and by church officers allowing themselves to be denuded of the authority with which their Master has clothed them, and without the exercise of which the great and salutary ends of their office cannot be gained.

A Christian church is a very free society; but they mistake the matter who consider it as a democracy. It is a monarchy, administered by inferior magistrates, chosen by their fellow subjects, who are to execute the King's laws, being guided solely by his word, and neither by their own judgment or caprice, nor by the opinions and will of those whom they govern. Christ is the Lord, and he administers his government by officers appointed according to his ordinance, and regulated by his laws. It is of great importance, both to the office-bearers and private members of a Christian church, that they have distinct scriptural views on this

¹ 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. Heb. xiii. 17.

subject, that the former may not exact what they have no right to, and that the latter may not refuse what, by the law of Christ, they are bound to give.

It is an elementary principle in the Christian polity, that the office-bearers of every Christian church should be chosen by the members of that church. No man should become an office-bearer in the Christian church, but thus by the suffrage of his brethren : and every individual in joining a Christian church which has office-bearers, by doing so chooses them as his ecclesiastical superiors. Pastors and teachers are Christ's gifts.¹ The Holy Ghost constitutes all true ecclesiastical overseers;² but he does this, not by miraculous interposition, but by endowing them with the suitable qualifications, and inclining their brethren to call them to the exercise of these gifts. The primitive church elected their own officers. The Apostles ordained them, but those ordained by them were chosen by the brethren.³

The power of election was with them, and continued to be so, till the church became so corrupted as scarcely to deserve the name. So important is this consideration, in my apprehension, that I could not plead for obedience or submission as an ecclesiastical duty from Christian men in their social capacity, to a person imposed on them from without, either by civil or ecclesiastical authority. Non-intrusion is the fundamental principle of the administrative polity of the Christian church. Where a man, claiming rightly or wrongly the character of an elder in Christ's church, is not chosen explicitly or implicitly by me to be over me in the Lord, I am not bound to submit to him as my pastor.

Even to those elders whom the members of a church have explicitly or implicitly chosen to be their elders, the obedience due is obedience within certain clearly defined limits. It is only in the discharge of the duties of their office that they are to be submitted to ; and even in the discharge of

¹ Eph. iv. 11.

² Acts xx. 28.

³ Acts vi. 3, 4.

these duties, they are to be submitted to only as far as they administer the law of the one Lord. It is not to the arbitrary will of your elders that you are bound to submit. It is to them declaring and executing the will of Christ. "Pastors" (that is, elders) says Mr Fuller, "are that to a church which the executive powers or magistrates of a free country are to the people at large; the organs of the law. Submission to them is submission to the law." If elders teach doctrine inconsistent with the doctrine of Christ, or enjoin any thing inconsistent with his law, they are not to be submitted to, but on the contrary opposed; opposed to the face, for they are to be blamed. But when the Christian eldership keep themselves within the proper bounds of their office, it is the duty of all private members of the society to submit to and obey them; and they cannot do otherwise without disturbing the peace of the society, interfering with the edification both of themselves and of their fellow church members, and drawing down upon themselves that disapprobation with which the one Lord, who is the Author of order and not confusion, must regard all who resist his ordinances.

The truth on the subject of church authority has never been better stated than by the learned and judicious Dr Owen: "The obedience due to church rulers is not a blind, implicit obedience. A pretence hereof has been abused to the ruin of the souls of men; but there is nothing more contrary to the whole nature of gospel obedience, which is our reasonable service. It has respect unto them in their office only, and while they teach the things which the Lord Christ hath appointed them to teach; when they depart from these, there is neither obedience nor submission due to them. Wherefore, in the performance of these duties, there is supposed a judgment to be made of what is enjoined or taught by the word of God. Our obedience unto them must be obedience to God. On these suppositions their word is to be obeyed, and their rule submitted to, not only because they are true and right materially, but also because

they are theirs, and conveyed from them unto us by Divine institution.”¹

Keeping these general remarks in view, let us proceed to consider a little more particularly what is included in that submissive obedience which the Christian people, according to the law of the Lord, owe to the office-bearers whom they themselves have chosen. And here, with a reference to the view taken of the official duties of the eldership in a former discourse, I shall show, in succession, how the members of the church are to submit themselves to the elders’ teaching, and to the elders’ superintending or governing. But before entering on this illustration, I have to solicit your attention, for a moment, to two things which may be considered as necessary pre-requisites, in order to any individual rightly discharging his duty to the eldership, in either of these aspects. These are, first, a reverence for church government as an ordinance of Christ; and secondly, a respect for the persons, who, in the church of which the individual is a member, are invested with office.

§ 1. *Preliminary requisites to the discharge of the duty of subjection to Elders.*

(1.) *Conviction of the Divine authority of Church order.*

To fit a man for the right discharge of the duty here enjoined, it is not necessary that he should be persuaded that every arrangement in the church with which he is connected is of Divine authority; but it is of great importance that he should be persuaded that the Christian church is a divine, not a human institution; and that its office-bearers, properly chosen, are authorized by its Divine Head to execute his laws, and administer his ordinances. Without such a conviction, ecclesiastical obedience, as a religious duty, is impossible. The individual may comply with the arrangements as expedient, but he must feel himself at liberty,

¹ Owen on the Hebrews.—Vol. iv. p. 260. Fol. ed.

whenever he thinks them inexpedient, which is nearly equivalent to whenever he feels them to be inconvenient, to decline compliance with them. A Christian church is a voluntary society, in as much as no man can lawfully be compelled either to enter into its fellowship or to continue in it; but it is not a voluntary society, either in the sense that a Christian man can, without impropriety, continue unconnected with it; or, having connected himself with it, is not bound to submit to the laws of its Lord and King, administered by office-bearers appointed according to his revealed will.

A great deal of the insubordination which prevails in Christian churches originates in the want of just views and settled convictions on this point. It is certainly true of ecclesiastical government, whatever form it wears, where the rights of Jesus Christ as the Head, and the privileges of his people are provided for, in a higher sense than of civil government, that it is "of God;" and that "he who resists it," in the performance of its legitimate functions, "resists the ordinance of God, and receives to himself condemnation."

(2.) *Personal respect for those invested with office.*

Inferior in importance to this, but only inferior to it, is the second pre-requisite to the right discharge of the duty of submission or obedience to church officers: A personal respect for the individuals invested with office. To discharge the duties of civil obedience without this, is difficult. Without this, to discharge the duties of ecclesiastical obedience is impossible. No man ought to become a member of a church where the office-bearers, as a body, do not command his respect for their personal qualifications. He sports with his own edification if he does so. Nor ought he to continue a member of a church, where, as a body, they forfeit their claims on his respect. This is obvious; for how, in this case, can he have Christian fellowship with them?

In churches, in any good measure rightly constituted, the

office-bearers are likely to be men worthy of esteem for their own sake, as well as for their work's sake. If they are not, it must reflect much discredit on those who placed them in a situation so prominent and so responsible ; a station which men of low Christian attainments, and doubtful spiritual character, cannot occupy without dishonour to Christianity, and injury to the edification of the church. This consideration ought to have a powerful effect on the minds of church members in electing office-bearers, and of Christians fixing on a particular religious society with which permanently to connect themselves. They ought to see to it that the elders of the church they belong to, be such men as that nothing in their private character and deportment shall throw obstacles in the way of the discharge of the duty due to them as public officers ; but that, on the contrary, the respect which they cannot but feel for their worth as Christian brethren, shall make it a very easy thing to render to them the honour and submission due to them as Christian elders.

§ 2. *Subjection to the Elders as Teachers.*

Let me now a little more particularly consider what this honour and submission is, in reference to the two great departments of the elders' official duty, explained in a former discourse : Teaching and superintendence. And first, of the submission which church members owe to their elders as teachers. Now, church members are certainly not bound to believe every thing their elders teach, nor to do every thing they enjoin ; nay, they are not bound to believe any thing they teach, merely because they teach it ; to do any thing they enjoin, merely because they enjoin it. But they are bound to submit to their teaching, both by regularly and conscientiously waiting on their instructions, and by receiving these instructions in the candid, humble spirit of discipleship.

Attendance on, and attention to, his teaching, is what every Christian teaching elder is entitled to from those

under his care. It is the duty of the Christian teacher to "wait on his teaching."¹ The Christian teaching elder, who, without a very sufficient reason, is not in his own place when the church assembles to observe the ordinances of Christ, among which attention to the doctrine of the Apostles is one of the most important, is in fault. He ought to be there, prepared to expound and enforce the doctrine and law of the Lord, like a householder with a well-furnished store, out of which he is ready to distribute things new and old, "to give to each of the household his portion in due season." But the same authority which requires the elders to be present to teach, requires the brethren to be present to be taught. The pulpit must not only be filled, but in every case, without a sufficient reason for absence, by its proper occupant; so ought the pew. Regular attendance on the public instructions of the teaching elders is the fundamental part of submission to them. If you do not hear your own elders, how can you be taught by them so as to be "obedient to them in the Lord?" And it is of importance that there should be attendance at the hour as well as on the day of public instruction. Punctuality as well as regularity should be attended to. It should be said of every Christian assembly as of Peter's congregation in the house of Cornelius, when the minister rises to address them, "They are *all* present before God, to hear all things that are commanded of God."²

The remark respecting attendance on the instruction of the elders, applies not only to their public teaching, but also to their ministrations from house to house. It is obviously the duty of the church members, so far as it is practicable, to afford the elders an opportunity of giving them those instructions more appropriate to their individual character and circumstances, which it would be unsuitable to communicate in public addresses.

But there must be attention as well as attendance; church

¹ Rom. xii. 7.

² Acts x. 33.

members must show their submission to their elders' teaching, not only by a regular personal waiting on their instructions, but also by giving them the ready attention and the respectful consideration they deserve. They are to listen, and to listen not in the temper of captious critics, but of humble docile disciples; as persons who are come to learn the doctrine and law of the Lord, and who consider the teaching eldership as his appointed ordinance for bringing and keeping his law before their mind. It is one of the many great advantages of a stated ministry, that they who have placed themselves under it, are in a great measure freed from temptation to indulge in that critical mode of hearing, where the hearer acts the part rather more of the judge than of the disciple; seeking to form an opinion respecting the powers of the mind, the orthodoxy of the doctrine, or the qualities of the style and manner of the preacher, rather than to derive spiritual improvement. The church member, in listening to the teacher whom he has chosen, with whose character and qualifications he is satisfied, with whose style and manner he is familiar, is, no doubt, like one whose spiritual senses are exercised to discern good and evil, to judge of the accordance of what he hears with the Divine infallible exhibition of the doctrine and law of Christ; but he is to come, expecting to hear nothing inconsistent with this, disposed to give a candid consideration to every thing that is said, anxious to hear what God the Lord will say to him, and expecting to hear this through the medium of his own elders, the instructors of his own unbiassed choice, the divinely-appointed organs of instruction, and determined to "receive with meekness the word," which, if "engrafted" into him, will indeed "save his soul."

Instead of taking offence when the elder in teaching comes very close to his conscience, the church member should readily and, thankfully receive "the reproof" which gives "wisdom;" and, instead of rising in inward rebellion against the preacher, should accept the warning and rebuke which his Master and ours administers through his instrumentality.

The church member who treats the instructions of the elders in an opposite spirit, violates the law in the text, forgets his place in the body of Christ, and throws almost invincible obstacles in the way of their usefulness, and his own edification. It is a just observation of Mr Fuller, "If men attend preaching merely as judges of its orthodoxy, they will receive no advantage to themselves, and may do much harm to others. It is the humble Christian who hears that he may be instructed, corrected, and quickened in the ways of God, who will obtain that consolation which the gospel affords."

§ 3. *Submission to the elders as superintendents.*

It only remains now that we say a few words on the duty of submission due by church members to their elders as superintendents, as those who are "over them in the Lord," who "have the oversight of them," who "have the rule over them." And here I shall, first, attend to the submission which is due to the eldership in their corporate capacity, and then to that which is due to individual elders when performing their duties as superintendents.

(1.) *Submission to the eldership as a body.*

Submission to the eldership as a body, or to the session, as we call that body, has a reference to the two great functions that body has to perform: the preservation of external order in the society, and the exercise of spiritual discipline in the society. It is plain that in such a society as a Christian church, there are certain arrangements with respect to the time and place of meeting, and the order and minor circumstances of the services, that must be made and attended to. It belongs to the eldership to make such regulations, and it is the duty of the members of the church to observe them. These arrangements may not in every case seem to individual members to be the best; they may not be the best. It is quite right in private members to suggest to the elders what they think would be an improvement; but it is for the

elders to judge of such things ; and their judgment, in every case where conscience is not concerned, should be submitted to. If this be not attended to, there can be no such thing as order in a church.

The other form of submission to the eldership, submission to them as the administrators of the discipline of the society, requires somewhat more extended illustration. The admission of members into the body, the dealing with such members as have violated the laws of the society, and the exclusion of obstinate offenders from the society, are important official duties of the eldership. In the right discharge of these functions, the members of the society have a deep interest, and every member of the church should show that he is aware of this. The province of the members is not, however, directly to do these things ; but to furnish, where they have it in their power, the means to the eldership to do them to the best advantage. It is their duty, when they are aware that individuals are applying for admission into the society, to give their elders any information which may help them to a right decision in a question of vital importance to the body ; and in the same way, when offences occur, after having used in vain the means appointed by our Lord (Matt. xviii.) for having them removed privately, to bring them before the assembly of the eldership, and to give them all the assistance in their power to have them properly disposed of. Every member of a church is bound “to look diligently lest any fellow church member fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble the body, and many be defiled.”¹

In the decisions of the eldership, as to admission, discipline, and exclusion, it is the duty of the members of the church to acquiesce, except in cases where they have satisfactory evidence that the law of Christ has not been rightly administered ; and even where they may suppose that this has been the case, they are not to take it on them to judge

¹ Heb. xii. 15.

and condemn those whom they themselves have elected to judge in such matters ; far less are they to blazon their view of the matter before the church, least of all before the world. They are respectfully to remonstrate with the eldership, and, if they cannot obtain satisfaction, they are to apply to those larger associations of elders, which, under the name of presbyteries and synods, our church polity, in harmony, as we think, with the great leading principles of order laid down in the New Testament, provide ; and if even then they cannot obtain satisfaction, if the matter is of such importance as to require it, after giving testimony against what they consider as a violation of the law of Christ, they should peaceably retire from the society. For private members of the church to counterwork the eldership in the legitimate discharge of their functions ; to attempt, by producing popular commotions, to overawe their deliberations, or interfere with and overthrow their judgments, is plainly inconsistent with every thing like good order, and directly opposed to that submission here enjoined by the supreme authority in the church.

Before leaving this part of the subject, I must say a word or two as to the duty of submission which a member of the church owes to the eldership when he himself unhappily becomes a subject of discipline. Such a person may, through mistake, or even through malignity, be regularly brought before the session as an accused person. In such circumstances, the individual concerned is not to refuse to submit the case to trial. He is not to behave as if he thought the eldership were acting an unkind part to him, in doing what they are imperatively bound to do, to examine every question connected with the purity of the body, regularly brought before them ; he is to furnish them with the means of vindicating his character and that of the body, if he has been unjustly accused ; and if he have really committed a fault, he is readily to acknowledge it, not carping at every mistake that may have been committed either by his accusers or judges, but by confession, penitence, and refor-

mation, putting it in the power of the elders with as little delay as possible to restore him.

It is a very hazardous thing for offending members of a church not to submit themselves to their elders, when, in the impartial administration of the wise and benignant law of Christ, they are endeavouring to heal their backslidings, and wipe off the stain their conduct has cast on the worthy name, and remove the stumbling-block it has cast before both the church and the world. It is no light matter to set at nought the authority of an assembly of elders met in the name of Christ, and intelligently and honestly administering his laws. There is a deeper solemnity hangs over such an assembly, however humble in worldly rank may be its members, than even the highest court which refers merely to the affairs of this world. He that despises them, despises their Lord; and he who despises him, despises also him who sent him.

(2.) *Submission to the elders as individuals.*

A very few remarks on the duty of submission due from the church members to the individual elder, in discharging his function of superintendence, shall conclude these discussions. It is the duty of the elder to watch for the souls of those placed under his more immediate superintendence, to see that those duties on which their church membership is suspended be carefully performed. I refer to such duties as attendance on public worship, the religious government and education of their families, the maintenance of family worship, &c. It is also their duty to see that they be generally acting as becometh saints; walking so as to please God, and adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

To enable himself to perform these duties, the elder must seek a more intimate acquaintance than the mere common intercourse of society can give; and must make inquiries which, from a stranger, would be justly counted intrusive and impertinent. The inquiries of the elder should be kindly

taken, as originating in a desire to preserve a good conscience to himself, and to promote the highest interests both of the individual and of the society. And when he finds it necessary to exhort, and warn, and even rebuke privately, all this proceeding from a regard to Christ's law, and being, indeed, but an execution of it, is to be met in a becoming spirit, not submitted to as a hardship, but received as a privilege. The proper discharge of these private duties of the elder, and the meeting them in a right spirit, would mightily promote the edification of the body, and most happily lighten the disciplinary labours of the eldership.

"It has long appeared to me," says that wise and good man Andrew Fuller, "that there are some species of faults in church members, which are not proper objects of church censure, but of private pastoral admonition" by the elders; "such as spiritual declension, hesitation on important truth, occasional neglect of religious duties, worldly anxieties, and the early approaches to any evil course. A faithful elder,¹ with an eye of watchful tenderness, will perceive the first symptoms of spiritual disorder, and by a timely hint will counteract its operations." The church members may be aware that this is very self-denying work to the elder, who would much rather visit him with the smile of affectionate congratulation than with a countenance which says, My child, I stand in doubt of you. And he ought not to render that disagreeable but important part of his work more disagreeable, by manifesting an irritable and resentful disposition, but receive the warning and the reproof which Christian love dictates, and which Christian law requires, with candour, and even gratitude. "Correction may be grievous to him that forsaketh the way, but he that hateth reproof shall die."²

Such is a short view of the duty of church members to their office-bearers, as here enjoined by the Apostle. It is indeed what Archbishop Leighton terms it, just "the obedience due to the discipline of God's house. This is

¹ Pastor is Mr F.'s word ; but, we have seen, pastor and elder are synonymous.

² Prov. xv. 10.

all we plead for on this point. And know, if you refuse it, and despise the ordinance of God, he will resent the indignity as done to him. And oh, that all that have that charge of his house upon them would mind his interest wholly, and not rise in conceit of their power, but wholly employ and improve it for their Lord and Master; and look on no respect to themselves, as for themselves desirable, but only so far as is needful for the profitable discharge and advances of the work in their hands. What are the differences and regards of men? How empty a vapour! and whatsoever it is, nothing is lost by single and entire love of our Lord's glory, and total aiming at that. Them that honour him He will honour, and those that despise Him shall be despised."

I shall conclude this part of the subject by briefly illustrating the argument by which the Apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, enforces compliance with an injunction of parallel meaning. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."¹ Think of the work in which they are engaged; think of the character which they bear in performing it; think of the effect which your obedience or disobedience will have on the manner in which this work will be performed; and think of the influence which the manner in which their work is performed will have on your own interests.

Think of the work of your elders. They watch, they watch for you, they watch for your souls. They watch; their work requires constant solicitude; they must be ever on the alert, to observe danger and to prevent evil. They watch for you. Your best interests are the object of their solicitude. They are not watching for their own emolument or fame, but for your happiness. Others are watching against you; they are watching for you. Satan is watching you as a wolf the sheep-fold, to steal and to destroy. Your

¹ Heb. xiii. 17.

elders watch, as faithful shepherds, to protect and save you. The world is watching you with a malignant eye, waiting for your halting. Your elders are watching, with the solicitude of parents, to keep you from falling. They watch for your souls—for that which is, of all you possess, most precious. Surely those who are benevolently engaged in a work so full of solicitude and labour to promote your highest interests, should not be counteracted by you, as they will be if you be not subject to them in the Lord.

Then think of the character they bear in doing this work. They watch as they who must give account. They are commissioned and responsible. What they do, they do by the authority of him who has appointed them. Do not resist them in their proper work, as you would not offend Him; and remembering that they must give account to him, recollecting what a stake they have in the matter, do not wonder that they should risk even offending you by the discharge of their duty, rather than run the risk of being ashamed before him at his coming, as they must be if they act not the part of faithful watchmen.

Consider still further the effect your submission, or non-submission, is likely to have on their discharge of their work. If you do not submit yourselves, they will perform their work with grief. There are few bitterer sorrows than that of a faithful elder, labouring among a people who counteract his attempts to promote their spiritual improvement. Even Moses, one of “the elders, who by faith received a good report” when the Israelitish people were disobedient and rebellious, was tempted to wish that God would kill him out of hand rather than continue to cause him to see his wretchedness.¹ Slothful, selfish, cold-hearted, cavilling, conceited, contentious congregations, have broken the spirit of many a faithful minister of Christ, and made him go mourning to the grave.

And if you do submit yourselves, they will perform their work with joy. They will have a holy satisfaction in it. Their

¹ Num. xi. 15.

work will be their reward. Their hearts will be lifted up in the ways of the Lord. The joy of the Lord will be their strength. All good Christian elders can say with John the elder, "We have no greater joy than to see our children walk in truth."

And then, finally, think of the influence which the manner in which the work is performed will have on your own interests. If it is performed with grief, that will be unprofitable for you. The labours of a disheartened spiritual teacher or superintendent are not likely to be effective. Even where there is the highest degree of spiritual holy principle, the hands will wax feeble when the heart is discouraged; and the blessing of the great Master is not likely to be imparted when his commands are disregarded, and his servants misused. On the other hand, if your elder's work is performed with joy, it will be profitable to you. He will be enabled to do all his work in the most satisfactory way. His best affections will be strongly drawn out to those who rightly estimate his labours, and show a regard to the law of the Lord; and he will pray for you, and preach to you with double fervour and impression. Seeing of the travail of his Master's soul, and of his own, he will be satisfied; and he will become more and more desirous that those in whom the good work is going forward, under his instrumentality, may grow in all holy attainments; he will become ingenious in devising, and unwearied in executing plans for their spiritual improvement; and the great Head of the church, regarding with a benignant smile the affectionate laborious eldership, and the docile obedient church, shall pour out on them in rich abundance of the selectest influences of his grace, and bless them, and make them blessings. Happy elders! Happy church! In their experience is verified the ancient oracle, "Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee: the glory of the Lord will be thy rereward. And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones; and thou shalt be like a

watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not.”¹

III. OF THE DUTY WHICH ALL IN A CHRISTIAN CHURCH OWE TO EACH OTHER, “MUTUAL SUBJECTION.”

There still remains to be considered the duty which all in a Christian church, whether office-bearers or private members, owe to each other, as stated by the Apostle in these words, “Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”

It has been supposed by some interpreters, that these words are not to be considered as having any particular reference to Christians in their ecclesiastical relations, but as an injunction referring to all the relations of human life; and that the subjection one to another required, is either that mutual kindly consideration of each other's interests, and that readiness to submit to inconvenience to promote these interests, which is required by the law, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do also to them,” and which is equally due in all the relations of society, from all to all; or that the Apostle meant to intimate, that not only in the ecclesiastical relation, but that in all the relations of life, subjection to superiors is a Christian duty; that not only is the church member to be subject to the church ruler, but the member of the state to the state ruler, the member of the family to the family ruler; the wife to the husband, the child to the parent, the servant to the master; that, in one word, wherever the relation of inferior and superior is established by God, there the duty of subjection finds place, as in Ephesians v. 21, where the general command, “Submit yourselves to one another,” is followed and illustrated by the particular injunctions, ‘Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands; children, obey your parents; servants, be obedient to

¹ Isa. lviii. 10, 11.

your masters.' Either of these important moral truths might, without violence, be brought out of the words before us, viewed by themselves ; but considered as a part of a closely connected paragraph, there can be no reasonable doubt, that the term "all of you," refers to the elders and to the juniors just mentioned, the office-bearers and members of the church ; and that the duty enjoined is a duty equally owing by the elders to each other, by the members to each other, and by the elders and members to each other.

It may be of use in enabling you to perceive the precise import and bearing of the Apostle's words, to remark, that their literal rendering is, "But let all of you, being subject one to another, be clothed with humility ; for God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble." As if he had said, ' While it is the duty of church officers to exercise the rule with which Christ has invested them, and for church members to yield the obedience which Christ has enjoined on them, there is a kind of mutual subjection which all church members owe to all church members ; which all church officers owe to all church officers ; ay, which all church officers owe to all church members ; in order to the discharge of which, it is necessary to cherish and display that humility which is in a remarkable degree the object of the Divine approbation.

There are obviously three topics which the Apostle's words bring before the mind, and which must be successively considered. 1. The duty which all connected with the Christian church, whether as office-bearers or members, owe to each other—mutual subjection. 2. The means which are necessary to the discharge of this duty—the being clothed with, that is, the cherishing and manifesting humility ; and, 3. The motive urging the use of this means, its being the object of the peculiar approbation of God—"God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble."

CHAP. I. OF THE MUTUAL SUBJECTION WHICH ALL IN A
CHRISTIAN CHURCH OWE TO EACH OTHER.

§ 1.—*What this does not imply.*

Let us first, then, inquire, what is that **MUTUAL SUBJECTION** which the Apostle here enjoins on all Christians, whether office-bearers or private members. It is so plain as scarcely to require to be noticed, that the subjection here required is by no means the same thing, though expressed by the same word, as the submission which, in the preceding clause, is enjoined on the juniors to the elders, the church members to the church rulers. It is obvious that church members are not bound to submit, to be subject to, their fellow church members as they are to their elders; still less, if possible, can elders be bound to submit or be subject to the members, as the members are to be to them. This is obviously impossible; and to attempt it, were just in other words to annul church government, and to introduce all the disorders of ecclesiastical anarchy.

Nor does the command before us enjoin any thing that in any degree involves in it a compromise of conscientious conviction respecting truth or duty. Christians must not submit to each other by taking each other's conscience as a guide in matters of faith or duty. Every man must give account of *himself* to God; and, so far as fellow men or fellow Christians are concerned, every man must think, inquire, judge, act for himself. "One is our Master, even Christ."

The Christian elder must not, in teaching or administering the law of Christ, fashion his conduct in subservience to the views and wishes of those committed to his care. He must speak what he knows to be true, because it is Christ's doctrine, whatever they may think of it. He must do what he knows to be right, because it is Christ's law, whatever they may think of it. He must not, in this way, be a servant of men, even of Christian men. Were he to serve men in this way he could not be a servant of Christ.

Were he to serve them in this way he would disserve them in a more important way.

No Christian man must submit, in matters of conscience, to be led by another, to avow or conceal what he wishes him to avow or conceal; to do or refrain from doing, what he wishes him to do or refrain from doing. Instead of being subject to one another, when any such submission is sought, either on the part of fellow church members, or of church office-bearers, we are not to give subjection to such usurpation, "no, not for an hour." Our submission to one another is to be submission "in the fear of God."

§ 2. *What this does imply.*

The mutual subjection referred to obviously implies a distinct recognition of, and a sacred regard to, our mutual rights as Christians and church members. Every encroachment on the rights of church members on the part of elders, every encroachment on the part of church members on the rights of their elders, every encroachment on the part of church members, either individually or collectively, on each other's rights—and there has been a great deal too much of all these kinds of encroachment in the history of Christianity—is inconsistent with this mutual subjection. Every Christian man, official or unofficial, is to be yielded to, submitted to, in the exercise of his legitimate rights. This is most reasonable; it is absolutely necessary to the peace of the society; and, if carefully and uniformly attended to, would go very far to secure that peace.

This regard for mutual rights must be connected with a just, and, because a just, a high estimate of the honour due to Christians as Christians. No man will ever well perform the duties of civil life who has not learned to "honour all men;" to honour man as man, and to see that the circumstances which distinguish one man from another are as nothing when compared with those which distinguish him from the lower creation. In like manner, the higher a Christian estimates those privileges, which are possessed by

all Christians as Christians, and those spiritual characteristics which belong to every Christian, and which can belong to none but a Christian, the better will he be prepared to perform the duty here enjoined. Every Christian, just because he is a Christian, in relation and character a child of God, will be an object of his respectful affection; and he will find it impossible intentionally to treat him unjustly, contemptuously, or unkindly.

The disposition to mutual submission is greatly strengthened by that generous appreciation of the personal Christian excellencies of those with whom we are associated in church fellowship, to which Christian principle naturally leads. Christians should be eagle-eyed towards each other's good qualities, "in honour preferring one another," each "esteeming others better than themselves."¹ When this state of mind prevails, "being subject to one another" follows as a matter of course. There is a disposition to oblige, a backwardness to occasion pain. While there is a mutual teaching, admonition, and exhortation, there is a mutual submission to instruction, admonition, and exhortation. And while a brother does not so hate his brother in his heart as to suffer sin on him, his brother reprov'd says by his conduct, "Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." Even Archippus, the office-bearer, will be subject to him, whether an official or only a Christian brother, who in the right spirit says to him, "Take heed to the ministry which thou has received of the Lord, to fulfil it."² There is a kindly yielding to each other in matters which do not involve conscience; and there is a serving one another in love, a readiness to submit to labour and inconvenience to promote one another's true happiness. Instead of insisting on having every thing our own way, we have a satisfaction in pleasing every one, his neighbour, to his edification. We not only bear with the infirmities of our bre-

¹ Rom. xii. 10. Phil. ii. 3.

² Psal. cxli. 5. Col. iv. 17.

thren. We bear their infirmities, not pleasing ourselves. We “forbear one another in love,” and “seek not every man his own, but every man his neighbour’s wealth.”¹

Such was the temper and conduct of the great Apostle of the Gentiles ; though free from all, he became the servant of all. He most willingly both spent, and was spent, to promote the welfare of his brethren ; and declares that he would neither eat flesh, nor drink wine, while the world stood, if by this means his brother was likely to be offended, or made weak. “Who was weak, and he was not weak ; who offended, while he did not burn. To the weak he became as weak, that he might gain the weak. To the Jew he became as Jew, that he might gain the Jew ; to them who were under the law as under the law, that he might gain them who were under the law ; to them who were without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under the law to Christ, that he might gain them without law. He became all things to all men, that he might gain some.”² Nor was this disposition in him confined to fellow Christians ; he was willing to be subject to every man, if he could but promote his happiness, secure his salvation.

Such was the temper and conduct of the great Apostle’s infinitely greater Lord and Master, and ours. He, though “Lord of all,” became “the servant of all.” Amid his disciples, he was as “one who served.” “The Son of man,” said he, and the whole of his life was an illustration of the saying, “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give himself a ransom for many.”³ Never was the lesson here given by the Apostle so strikingly taught, and so powerfully recommended, as in the conduct of our Lord in that memorable night in which he was betrayed, of which we have so touching a narrative in the evangelical history. “Now, before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should

¹ Rom. xv. 2. Eph. iv. 2. Col. iii. 13. 1 Cor. x. 24.

² 1 Cor. ix. 20, 21.

³ Matt. xx. 28.

depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end. And there was a strife among the disciples, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And supper being ended, 'or rather being come,' Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself, 'clothing himself with humility.' After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. So, after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so. But he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as one that serveth. Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also should wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; neither he that is sent greater than he who sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."¹

This kind of mutual subjection, readiness to serve one another, should characterise all the members of the church in their conduct to one another; but it should be especially prominent in the character and conduct of the office-bearers of the church. They are never to forget, that though they are over their brethren in the Lord in one sense, in another they are not their lords; Christ Jesus is the Lord; they

¹ John xiii. 2-17. Luke xxii. 24-27.

are their “servants for Jesus’ sake.”¹ Our Lord, aware of the tendency of superiority of rank to produce arrogance, warns his official servants against this hazard. “Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.”² The same truth is suggested by the peculiar form of expression in the passage before us. “Ye juniors, in the discharge of their official functions, submit yourselves to the elders;” “but”³ this is not the only kind of submission that is required in the church—among Christians; “let all of you,” whether elder or younger, seniors or juniors, official rulers or private members, “let all of you be subject one to another.” Mutually do service; and let him who is most esteemed in the church be the readiest to serve.

CHAP. II. OF THE MEANS OF PERFORMING THIS DUTY,
“THE BEING CLOTHED WITH HUMILITY.”

Let us now, in the second place, consider the means by which Christians are to be enabled thus to be subject to one another. It is by being “clothed with humility.” “Let all of you, being subject one to another, be clothed with humility.” The idea plainly is, cherish and manifest humility; that will dispose and enable you to be subject one to another. But there is something peculiarly beautiful and instructive in the manner in which the idea is brought out. The Apostle, in the Epistle to the Colossians, calls on Christians to “put on,” among other Christian virtues, “humbleness of mind,” the same word rendered here humility, as necessary to their “forbearing one another, and forgiving one another,” which are just particular forms of being subject to one another.⁴ The figure there is just the general one common in all languages. The cultivation and display of a disposition is represented as the putting on and

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 5.

² Matt. xxiii. 8.

³ *Id.*

⁴ Col. iii. 12.

wearing a garment. But there is more in the phrase before us. The word rendered "Be clothed," is a remarkable one, occurring nowhere else in Scripture. It is borrowed from a piece of dress worn by servants when they were doing menial offices, a kind of apron fastened by strings, a piece of dress which at once intimated their station, and fitted them for the performance of its duties.^d The Apostle calls on Christians, viewed as servants to each other, to put on humility as this piece of dress, to tie it on; just as he calls them, as soldiers of the Captain of Salvation, to put on faith as a breastplate, and hope as an helmet. Cultivate humility, which will mark you as mutual servants, and fit you for mutual service. And it is difficult not to entertain the thought, that our Lord on the occasion already adverted to, putting on the towel like the servant's apron, and tying it around him, the visible emblem of his humility, and his readiness under its influence to serve, was not before the Apostle's mind; and that he then remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, words he was not likely to forget, "I have given you an example that ye should do, as I have done to you." All that is necessary here in the way of illustration, is shortly to show what that humility is which the Apostle enjoins, and then in a few words to point out how it fits Christians for being "subject one to another."

§ 1.—*Humility explained.*

Humility, or, as the same word is elsewhere rendered more literally, "humbleness of mind," "lowliness of mind," is expressive of a low because a just estimate of ourselves—of our nature, of our character, of our condition, of our deserts.

The humble man has just, and therefore lowly, views of his own nature, as a *creature* infinitely inferior to, entirely dependent on, God; greatly inferior to angels, belonging to the lowest order of God's intelligent offspring; and, as a *sinner*, the proper object not only of the judicial displeasure of God,

^d See note D.

¹ Col. iii. 12. Phil. ii. 3.

but of the moral disapprobation of all good and wise intelligences; inexcusably guilty, thoroughly depraved, righteously doomed to everlasting destruction; who, if saved at all, must owe his salvation to the riches of free grace, sovereign mercy.

The humble man has also just, and therefore lowly, views of his own individual character. He is sensibly impressed with the heinousness and aggravation of his own sins; he feels his own heart to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; he knows that in him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing. If his inward and outward man, his character and conduct, have been brought into any measure of conformity to the mind and will of God, he is aware that, so far as he is a new creature, he is "God's workmanship, created of him unto good works;" that "by the grace of God he is what he is;" that the work of renovation is very imperfect in him; that there is still very much wanting, very much wrong; and that, while he has much for which to be thankful, he has much of which to be ashamed, nothing of which to be proud.

And not only does the humble man form a low estimate of his nature generally, and of himself individually, when he tests human nature, and his own character and conduct, by the law of God, but he cherishes a humble opinion of himself, intellectually, morally, spiritually, comparatively with others. His tendency is to notice the excellences, rather than the faults of others; while he looks at his own faults rather than at his excellences, and "in lowliness of mind he esteems others better than himself." He knows his own deficiencies and faults much more extensively and thoroughly than he can know those of other men; and the charity which always accompanies true humility, leads him to attribute what seems to be good in other men to the best principle which can reasonably be supposed to have produced it; while it leads him, from his necessary ignorance of their motives, to make allowances for their defects and failings, which he cannot make for his own. Humility does not

lead a man to overlook or disclaim what God has done in him or by him, but it leads him to give all the glory to him to whom it is due; and while he cannot but see that God has made him to differ from others, and is deeply grateful for this, he at once feels that it is God alone who has done this; and is so sensible of the manner in which he has counterworked the Divine operations for his sanctification, that he is very ready to believe and acknowledge, that any other person blessed with his helps and advantages, would have greatly surpassed him in his attainments. When he thinks of what he is in comparison of what he ought to have been, in comparison of what he might have been, when he thinks of what others with far inferior advantages have attained to, and recollects that whatever is spiritually good in him has been put into his heart by the invincible, but not unresisted, efficacious operation of the Holy Ghost, he not only feels that he ought to lie very low before God, but that, even in reference to his fellow men, he has nothing to boast of.

Humility has been well described as consisting in “the not being deluded with a false conceit of what we have not, not puffed up with a vain conceit of what we really have, nor affecting to be esteemed by others, either in their imagining us to be what we are not, or discerning us to be what we are.”¹ Humility will not make us unconscious of what is good in us, but it will make us beware of imagining that to be good which is not, or that which is good to be better than it is; and it will constantly keep before the mind, that whatever good is in us, has been put into us, is not so much ours as God’s, the gift of his grace, the work of his Spirit, and thus make the very consciousness of our sanctification, instead of puffing us up, a means of deepening the conviction, that no flesh may “glory in his presence,” but that “he who glorieth must glory in the Lord.”² Such is the humility with which the Apostle exhorts all Chris-

¹ Leighton.

² 1 Cor. i. 29-31.

tians to be clothed, that they may be all subject one to another.

§ 2.—*The tendency of humility to secure mutual subjection.*

I have already adverted to the peculiar force of the expression, "Be clothed." The command does not refer so much, if at all, to the manifestation of this disposition in demeanour and language, as to the cherishing it in the heart, to the maintaining it in all circumstances, as that which fits a Christian for being subject to his fellow-Christians, by serving them in love, as the servant fastened his serving robes about him as necessary for the proper discharge of his duty as a servant. Humility is to the Christian, as the servant of all his brethren, what the appropriate dress for service was to the servant in common life. A proud, self-conceited man, is not disposed, is not qualified for serving others. He is continually making demands on others for service. It is their duty, in his estimation, to serve him, not his to serve them. A haughty mind ill comports with becoming all things to all men, pleasing our neighbour to his edification, in love serving each other, bearing one another's burdens, and so, in one word, fulfilling the law of Christ: just as a gaudy dress, a rich flowing robe, does not suit, is at once incongruous and inconvenient in one that serves. On the other hand, the humble-minded man is ready to serve, feels honoured in being permitted to do any office which can promote the honour of his Lord in the welfare of his brethren. Like the plainly, suitably-attired servant, he is like his work, and fit for it. He is ready to loose the latchets of his Lord's sandals, and to wash his brethren's feet.

The importance of humility, in order to the discharge of those offices which are so closely connected with the peace and spiritual prosperity of a church, is very strikingly manifested in the following exhortations of the Apostle Paul: "Be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done in strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than

themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, that was in Christ Jesus," the disposition to humble himself that he might serve others. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any."¹

CHAP. III. OF THE MOTIVE URGING CHRISTIANS TO CULTIVATE HUMILITY.

The only other topic in the text which requires consideration, is the motive employed by the Apostle to urge Christians to cultivate that humility which was so necessary to their mutually serving each other. "Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and," or rather, but² "giveth grace to the humble." The leading idea is, 'humility is the object of the approbation of God, and pride of his disapprobation; and he makes this very manifest in his dispensations respectively to the proud and to the humble.' The first question with every man ought to be, as to any disposition or action the first question with a Christian will be, What is the estimate God forms of them; what effect will the cultivation of the one and the performance of the other have on my relations towards him? and the resolution of that question ought to have more influence with every man, with every Christian will have more influence, than all other things taken together, as to his checking or cherishing the disposition, following or avoiding the course of conduct. This matter is very clear as to pride and humility, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." This is a quotation from the book of Proverbs, iii. 34, according to the Greek version in common use at the time; it runs thus in our version, which is a literal rendering of the Hebrew

¹ Phil. ii. 2-5. Col. iii. 12, 13.

² Δι.

original, "Surely he scorneth the scorers, but giveth grace to the lowly."

"God resists the proud." He sets himself to oppose him. It is impossible, in the nature of things, that God should not disapprove of pride, for it is a disposition which, just in the degree in which it prevails, unfits a man for his duty to God and to man, makes him a rebel to the one and an oppressor to the other; and, in any view we can take of it, it counteracts God's design to glorify himself in making his creatures happy. The Divine disapprobation against pride is strongly marked in an endless variety of ways. It is deeply impressed on the constitution of man as God's work, whether you consider the misery it inflicts on its subjects, or the disapprobation and dislike it produces in all who witness it. An apocryphal writer has said, "Pride was not made for man."¹ It may be with equal truth said, Man was not made for pride. It is a disposition he cannot indulge without making himself unhappy. They sadly err who "count the proud happy." There is harmony in all God's works, and, to make man happy, his disposition must correspond to his condition; a proud being, who is at the same time a dependent being, entirely dependent on God, to a great extent dependent on his fellow men, must be miserable. His whole life is a struggle to be and to appear to be what he is not, what he never can be.

The disapprobation of pride by God is evident, not only in his having so constituted man as that the proud man cannot be happy, but in his so constituting man as that the proud man is the natural object of disapprobation and dislike to all other men. No class of men are more disliked than proud men. And how could God more distinctly mark his disapprobation of pride, than by constituting human nature so, that the display of pride should excite in, and draw forth from men, the very opposite sentiments which the proud man wishes? He seeks admiration, he

¹ Eccclus. x. 18.

meets with contempt. No one really wishes to gratify the proud, and this mortification occasions general satisfaction.

In the ordinary course of his providential dispensations, God so often shows his opposition to pride, that it has become a proverb, that ‘a haughty spirit goeth before a fall;’ and He has sometimes departed out of his usual mode of procedure, and miraculously shown how much he disapproves of haughtiness in man. Nebuchadnezzar, the proud king of Babylon, walked in the palace of his kingdom; and as he walked he spake and said, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” How strikingly and effectually did God resist this proud man, and show that He, the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgments, is able to abase those who walk in pride! While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, “O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee: And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar; and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws.” Take another example: “Upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne, and made an oration. And the people gave a shout, ‘It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.’ And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten up of worms, and gave up the ghost.”¹

The plan of salvation through Christ is so framed as strikingly to show that “God resisteth the proud.” No

¹ Dan. iv. 29-33. Acts xii. 21-23.

man can become a partaker of its blessings who does not “deny,” renounce “himself.” It is only as a being deserving of, capable of deserving, nothing but punishment, and deeply sensible of this, that any man can obtain the pardon and peace, the holiness and comfort, of the Christian salvation. “The rich,” in their own estimation, “are sent empty away.” Men who are all naturally proud must be “converted, and become” humble “like little children,” else they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.¹ And just in that degree in which pride prevails, even in a regenerate man, will he fail to enjoy the consolation that is in Christ. The declarations of Scripture on this subject are very explicit, “Pride and arrogancy I hate. The Lord knoweth the proud afar off. The lofty looks of men shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men shall be bowed down; and the Lord alone shall be exalted. For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low.”² “God,” to borrow the words of Archbishop Leighton, “singles out pride as his great enemy, and sets himself in battle array against it, as the word is.”³ It breaks the ranks of men in which he hath set them, when they are not subject, as the word is before;⁴ yea, it not only breaks rank, but rises up in rebellion against God, and doth what it can to dethrone him and usurp his place. Therefore he orders his force against it; and so be sure, if God be able to make his party good, pride shall not escape ruin. He will break it, and bring it low; for he is set upon that purpose, and will not be diverted.”

While God thus resists the proud, “he giveth grace”—that is, he showeth favour “to the humble.” Humility is the object of his approbation, and he shows this by his conduct to those who are characterised by it. A humble state of mind, as in accordance with truth, and calculated to promote the true happiness both of the individual who

¹ Luke i. 53.² Prov. viii. 13. Psal. cxxxviii. 6. Isa. ii. 11, 12.³ *Archidiaconi.*⁴ *Τὸ ἐναντιοῦν.*

cherishes it, and all with whom he is connected, must be the object of the Divine approbation; and we have just to reverse the representation given of the manifestation of the state of the Divine mind, in reference to the proud, to see how he shows favour to the humble. He does so in the quiet and peace of mind which, from the very constitution of human nature, humility produces; and in the comparative freedom from ill-will, and enjoyment of the esteem and good wishes of others, which from the same constitution it secures. The more deeply a man realizes his insignificance as a creature, and his demerit as a sinner, his guilt and depravity and helplessness, the more readily does he embrace the gospel of God's grace, "the word of the truth of the gospel," and in it obtain possession of all heavenly and spiritual blessings. It is the man who knows and believes that he is a fool, that is made wise; the man who has no hope in himself, that obtains good hope through grace; the man who sees and feels that he is nothing but sin, that is made the righteousness of God in Christ; the man who loathes himself, that is sanctified wholly in the whole man's soul, body, and spirit. It is the man who most feels his own weakness, that is most strengthened with all might in the inner man, and experimentally understands the spiritual paradox, "When I am weak, then am I strong." It is a remark, by one who was very intimately acquainted with the hidden life, "It is undoubtedly the secret pride and selfishness of our hearts that obstructs much of the bounty of God's hand, in the measure of our graces and the sweet embraces of his love, which we should otherwise find. The more that we let go of ourselves, still the more should we receive of himself. Oh, foolish we, that refuse so blessed an exchange!"¹ The passages of Scripture in which God declares his approbation of humility, and his delight in the humble, are very numerous. "Though the Lord be high, he has respect to the lowly. He forgets not the cry of the humble, he hears their desire;

¹ Leighton.

he prepares their hearts, he causes his ear to hear. Thus, saith the high and the lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one." And this is the declaration of Him who came to reveal the character and will of his Father, and who was himself meek and lowly in spirit, "Whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; but he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."¹

Leighton's paraphrase on "God giveth grace to the humble," is very characteristically beautiful. "He pours it out plentifully on humble hearts. His sweet dews and showers slide off the mountains, and fall on the low valley of humble hearts, and make them pleasant and fertile. The swelling heart, puffed up with a fancy of fullness, has no room for grace, is not hollowed and fitted to receive and contain the graces that descend from above. And again, as the humble heart is most capable, as, emptied and hollowed out, it can hold most; so it is most thankful, acknowledges all as received. But the proud cries all is his own. The return of glory that is due for grace, comes most freely and plentifully from a humble heart. God delights to enrich it with grace, and it delights to return to him glory. The more he bestows on it, the more it desires to honour him withal; and the more it doth so, the more readily he still bestows more upon it. And this is the sweet intercourse between God and the humble soul. This is the noble ambition of humility, in respect of which all the aspirings of pride are low and base. When all is reckoned, the lowliest mind is truly the highest; and these two agree so well, that the more lowly it is, it is thus the higher; and the higher thus, it is still the more lowly."

Surely this is a powerful motive for the cultivation of

¹ Psal. cxxxviii. 6; x. 12, 17. Isa. lvii. 15; lxvi. 2. Matt. xxiii. 12; v. 3.

humility. What so much to be feared as God's disapprobation, and what so much to be desired as his favour? The command, Be ye clothed with humility, has great additional force from the consideration, that this was the chosen garb of our Lord and King, and chosen by him as that in which he could both best serve his Father and his people. Surely, to use the words of an old divine, "It is meet that we should remember, that the blessed Saviour of the world hath done more to prescribe, and transmit, and secure this grace, than any other, his whole life being a great continued example of humility; a vast descent from the glorious bosom of his Father to the womb of a poor maiden; to the form of a servant, to the miseries of a sinner, to a life of labour, to a state of poverty, to a death of malefactors, to an untimely grave, to all the intolerable calamities which we deserved; and it were a good design, and yet but reasonable, that we should be as humble in the midst of our calamities and base sins, as he was in the midst of the fullness of the Spirit, great wisdom, perfect life, and most admirable virtues."¹

And while the thought, that it is only by thus putting on humility that Christians can be mutually subject to and serve each other, and thus promote the peace and prosperity of the church on earth, should be felt as a powerful incentive to grow in this grace; we should remember, also, that the cultivation of this grace is a necessary preparation for the holy delights of the church above. They to whom, on that day when men's destinies shall be finally fixed, the universal Judge will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father," are those who can scarcely recognise their own actions in those eulogized by him. And the exercises of heaven are such as only the humble can engage in with satisfaction. They fall down on their faces there before the throne, and Him who sits on it; they cast their crowns at his feet. The only worthiness they celebrate is the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain; and the whole glory of their salvation is as-

¹ Jeremy Taylor.

cribed to Him, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things. "Salvation to our God and to the Lamb for ever and ever." We must be formed to the temper of heaven if we would be sharers in its joys. We must have the same mind in us as is in the holy angels and the spirits of the just made perfect, if we would be admitted to their society, and participate in their delights. Were we to carry pride with us to heaven, it would soon cast us out again, as it did the angels, who kept not their first estate. Let us then earnestly covet a large measure of this heavenly temper. Let it be our constant prayer, that the Spirit of all grace would so bring the truth before our minds, and keep it there, respecting our condition and character as creatures and sinners, sinners lost by their own inexcusable guilt, saved solely by the sovereign grace of God, as that every rising of undue self-complacency may be repressed, and that we may be enabled to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, with all lowliness and meekness; with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Oh, how happy the church, where all the elders and all the members are habitually under the influence of Christian humility! May that blessing, through the grace of Him who is exalted Head over all things, to his church, be increasingly ours! And to his name be all the glory.

NOTE A.

How different was the spirit **which** animated those who pretended to be Peter's successors, appears strikingly in a remarkable story told in the Clementine Homilies:—"Peter, wishing to establish Zaccheus in a bishoprick, who was backward to accept of it, cast himself at his feet, and entreated him to administer *την αρχην*—the principedom. 'I would readily do,' said Zaccheus, 'whatever a prince ought to do; but I am afraid to bear the name, because it exposes to so much envy as to be dangerous.' Peter consented that Zaccheus should not take the name prince; but he gave him all the authority of one. *Και σου μὲν ἔργον*, said he, *κελεύειν; τῶν δὲ ἀδελφῶν ὑπείκειν καὶ μὴ ἀπειθεῖν*. 'It is your business to command; and, as to the brethren, it is theirs to submit to and obey you.'" It is universally admitted that the Clementine Homilies are forgeries; but they are very authentic evidences of the spirit of the Roman Church at the time of their production. The bishops are there represented as *Δυνασταί, βασιλεῖς, δεσποταί, κυριοί*. How strangely does this contrast with the words of the One Master,—“Call no man master on earth: be not ye called master.”—Hom. Clem. iii. 63, 64, 66, p. 646.

NOTE B.

“*Ἦ τῶν κληρῶν plurale: singulare ποιμνῆς. Ποιμνὴ μία. Grex unus sub uno Pastore principe Christo: sed κληροὶ portiones multæ, pro numero locorum et antistitum.*”—BENGEI.

“*Vetustus quidem fuit ille loquendi modus, ut totum ordinem ministrorum clerum, vocarent: sed utinam Patribus nunquam venisset in mentem ita loqui: quia quod toti Ecclesiæ Scriptura communiter tribuit, minime consentaneum fuit ad paucos homines restringere.*”—CALVIN.

“*Clerus temporibus Apostolorum erant plebei, quod apparet ex prima Petri Epistola majestuosæ.*”—SCALIGER.

“*Cleros vocat non diaconos aut presbyteros, sed gregem qui cuique fortè contigit gubernandus ne quis existimet, Episcopis in Clericos interdictum dominium, in ceteros esse permissum. Et presbyteros hic Episcopos vocat. Nondum enim increverat turba sacerdotum; sed quot erant Presbyteri, totidem erant Episcopi.*”—ERASMUS.

“*Olim populus Israeliticus κληρος, sors, sive patrimonium Dei. Deut. iv. 20; ix. 29. Nunc populus Christianus; cujus singulæ*

partes ut fieri solet *εν ὁμογενεσι* idem nomen participant.”—GROTIUS.

“*Κληρους* hereditates vocat Ecclesias singulas, quibus singuli pastores præficiuntur.”—SUICER.

“All believers are God’s clergy.”—LEIGHTON.

It deserves notice, that it is a verb derived from *κληρους* which is used, Acts xvii. 4, to describe the association of the believers with Paul and Silas at Thessalonica—*προσεκληρωθησαν*. Our translators have preserved the reference in their version “consorted.”

“*Κληρους* multi Latinorum interpretantur clericos; verumtamen longe probabilius est, per cleros intelligi gregis dominici portiones, quæ singulis Episcopis pascendæ ac regendæ velut sortito obtigerunt, juxta id quod Cyprianus dicit, Ecclesiam esse unam, cujus singulas portiones singuli Episcopi in solidum tenent.”—ESTIUS.

VATER takes a singular view of the meaning of the term here: “*Κληρων* plurali numero, non nisi, Acts i. 26, eodemque forsan significatu et hic.” In this case *κατακυρενεν των κληρων* would signify arbitrarily to overrule the votes, to disregard the will of the church, when manifested by their giving forth their *κληρους*.

NOTE C.

A word of similar meaning (*Νεανισκοι*) is apparently used in the New Testament to signify common soldiers, Mark xiv. 51, as well as in the profane Greek (Polyb. iv. 16; iii. 62). A similar usage prevails in the Latin language, as to the word of corresponding meaning (*Juvenis*). We find the same thing in the Hebrew language: Abraham’s armed servants are called “the young men” (*נערים*), Gen. xiv. 24. We have the same use of the word, Jos. ii. 1; 2 Sam. ii. 14: “The word ‘young,’ possesses, in the Christian usage of various languages, the sense of ‘lay’—see Bolten.”—STEIGER.

“*Νεωτεροι* hic non videntur esse natu minores; nam opponuntur doctoribus, sed potius auditores et discipuli, eodem fere sensu, quo, Luc. xxii. 26, *ὁ μειζων* et *ὁ νεωτερος* sibi opponuntur.”—ROSENMULLER.

“*Νεωτεροι* opponuntur *πρεσβυτεροις* et ex lege oppositionis intelligendi sunt omnes reliqui qui exceptis Presbyteris ecclesiam constituerent.”—KUTTNER.

SCHOTANUS, though obviously very averse, “a communi Doctorum sententia discedere videri,” states very distinctly, and defends very successfully, what appears to me the true meaning:

—“Hic per *juniores* intelligimus totam ecclesiam. Id autem probamus (1.) ex repetitione verbi *presbyteri*; (2.) ex collatione in verbis: *similiter*; (3.) quia summisionem regimini opponit; (4.) quia passim Apostoli quando agunt de officiis in quibus mutuus est respectus, solent utrumque urgere. Si autem quis dicat nomen illud *juniores* repugnari, respondemus—nequam. Nonne Apostolus Paulus totam Ecclesiam Galaticam ‘filiolos’ vocat, Gal. iv. 19, et hæc ratio est quia tum temporis præcipue Ecclesiæ præficiiebantur qui provectionis ætatis erant.”

“Per *juniores* autem hoc loco maxime intelligitur Grex qui pendet à pastoribus, quia pastores et *presbyteri* maxima ex parte electi fuerunt ex senioribus ætate et proinde maxima pars gregis constabat ex junioribus.”—AMESIUS.

NOTE D.

“*Κομβος* nodus vinculum quo illigabantur manicæ præsertim in vestitu servorum.”—BENGEL. Grotius gives the following quotation from Pollux, lib. iv., which is quite to the point:—Τῇ τῶν δούλων ἐξωμίδι καὶ ἱματιδίων τι προσκεῖται λευκόν, ὃ ἐγκομβῶμα λεγεται. Putting on the *ἐγκομβῶμα*, was preparing in a becoming manner to act as a servant; assuming the appearance and preparing for the duties of the servile state. “*Εγκομβῶμα* vestis humilis et servorum erat: qui cum breves tunicas quas *ἐπωμίδας* vocant gestarent, super has *ἐγκομβῶμα* induere solebant; palliolum vilissimum sed candidum; quod et *ἐπιβλημα* ut observant antiqui dicebant.”—HEINSIUS. Sac. Exercit. p. 577.

DISCOURSE XXII.

TWO VIEWS OF AFFLICTION AND ITS DUTIES.

1 PET. v. 6, 7.—Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

THERE are few practical questions of deeper and more extensive interest, than how should we conduct ourselves amid the afflictions of life, so as to be best sustained under them, most improved by them, and soonest and most certainly delivered from them? This is a question which concerns us all; for, however we may differ in other points of view, here we all occupy common ground. We are all sufferers. It is not less universally true that “man is born of a woman,” than that he is “born to trouble.” It is certain, too, that affliction, though in all forms in itself an evil, is far from being an unmixed evil; that by means of it, men, constituted and circumstanced as they are, may be made wiser and better, and ultimately happier, than they could have become without it. “It has been good for me that I have been afflicted,” says the Psalmist. “Chastisement yieldeth peaceable fruits,” says the Apostle. And there is “a great cloud of witnesses” of the wisest and the best, in every age, all of whom have set to their seal that this testimony is true.

It is, however, just as certain that there have been many sufferers who could not truly make the Psalmist's declaration their own. It has *not* been good for them that they have been afflicted. They were bad when affliction seized them; they did not improve under its grasp; and now that it has let them go, they are worse than ever. Indeed, the waters sent forth from the fountain of affliction seem in themselves poisonous as well as bitter. The infusion of a foreign ingredient into them, appears to be necessary to make them salutary, or even safe. Their effects are usually powerful; but they often aggravate rather than mitigate moral disease.

The different effects of affliction on different individuals, depend mainly on their being, or their not being, under the influence of the Holy Spirit; and that is chiefly manifested in the views they entertain of affliction, and in the dispositions they cherish under affliction, two things which are very closely connected with each other. The influence of affliction on the mind and character of a man who considers his sufferings as the effect of blind chance or unintelligent necessity, or of intelligent but malignant power; and who is inconsiderate, or proud, or fretful, or desponding under them—must be very different from its influence on the mind of a man who considers his sufferings as proceeding from the appointment, and inflicted by the agency, of the infinitely powerful, wise, righteous, and benignant Sovereign of the universe; as tokens of displeasure against sin, yet means of reclaiming sinners; as important parts of God's mysterious economy for making foolish, depraved, miserable man, wise, and good, and happy; and who cultivates a thoughtful, submissive, prudent, devout, patient, hopeful disposition under them.

The moral effects of affliction on an irreligious or superstitious mind cannot but be mischievous, though it will vary with the variety of character and circumstance, and take the form in one case of stupid insensibility; in another, of querulous fretfulness; in another, of hopeless despondency; in

another, of hardened impiety. It will in every such case drive men from God, not draw them towards him. It will make them worse and more miserable, not better and happier ; it will fit them for hell, not for heaven.

On the other hand, the moral effect of affliction in a mind enlightened with heavenly truth, and a heart pervaded by holy influence, must be in a very high degree advantageous. Every principle of the new life, such as faith, hope, penitence, patience, humility, self-sacrifice, is exercised and strengthened ; and the result is, increased conformity in mind, and will, and choice, and enjoyment, with the all wise, the all holy, the all benignant, the ever blessed God. Who would not wish that his afflictions might have this result ? We must be chastened, that is a settled point. "To each his sufferings, all are men." Who would not tremble to be so chastened as to be destroyed with the world ? who would not desire to be so chastened as to be made partakers of God's holiness ? It is this book that alone can so instruct us in the true nature of afflictive dispensations, and in the right way of dealing with these dispensations ; so that it may be secured that, in our case, the last, and not the first, result shall be realized. We must go to the school of revelation, in order to learn how to behave ourselves in the school of affliction so as to obtain improvement there ; and a most instructive lesson of this kind may be derived from that interesting passage of inspired Scripture which has been read as the subject of discourse. May the great Teacher, who makes all he teaches apt to learn, enable us so to improve it, as that "his rod and reproof," when he sees meet to subject us to them, may more than ever "give wisdom !"

These words present us with two interesting views of affliction ; first, as a state of subjection to the mighty hand of God ; and, secondly, as a state of anxiety and carefulness ; and with two corresponding views of the duty of the Christian under affliction, each accompanied with its appropriate motive. In the first view of affliction, the Christian is to humble himself under the mighty hand of God ; and

he is to do this because humility is well-pleasing to God, because it is the hand of God, the mighty hand of God, that he is under, and because doing so is the appointed way to be exalted in due time; and in the second view of affliction, the Christian is to cast all his cares on God, and he is to do this because God cares for him. This is the outline I mean to fill up in the remaining part of the discourse; and, in doing this, I shall not first consider the two views of affliction, then the two views of the duty of the Christian under affliction, and then the two views of motive urging to the performance of these duties, but I shall successively, as the Apostle does, take up each connected view of affliction, duty, and motive.

Before entering on this, however, it may be proper to say a word or two on the manner in which these two verses are connected with the immediately preceding context. In the close of his directory respecting ecclesiastical duties, the Apostle recommends the cultivation of humility as necessary to that mutual subjection by which all in Christian fellowship, whether office-bearers or private members, whether elders or juniors, should be distinguished; calling them to put it on as their appropriate dress when in love they served each other; and he strengthens his recommendation by quoting an Old Testament oracle, in which God's complacent approbation of the humble, and his indignant reprobation of the proud, are strongly expressed. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." And in passing to offering them some advices suited to those circumstances of persecution and trial to which, by the appointment of God, and through the direct and indirect agency of the great adversary the devil, they were already exposed, and were likely soon to be still more exposed, he naturally, in so high recommendation of humility as a disposition peculiarly pleasing to God, finds a ground for enjoining on them the cultivation and display of this virtue, in reference to their afflictions, viewed as the work of God's hand: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Hum-

ble yourselves *therefore* under the mighty hand of God." The quotation from the Old Testament is brought forward as a motive to enforce equally the injunction that precedes it, and the injunction that follows it.

I. FIRST VIEW OF AFFLICTION, AND ITS DUTY.

§ 1. *Affliction is subjection to the mighty hand of God.*

The first view here given us of a state of affliction is, that it is a state of subjection to the mighty hand of God. The words of the Apostle are equivalent to, Being in affliction, ye are under the mighty hand of God; humble yourselves under it. "The hand of God," like "the arm of the Lord," is a figurative expression for the power of God in action, as men put forth their power by their arm and hand. He is said to have brought his people from Egypt "by strength of hand;" that is, by the exertion of power. It is said, "None can stay his hand," none can prevent or control the exertion of his power. When Job expresses a wish that, by an act of Divine power, he might be destroyed, he says, "Oh that it would please God to let loose his hand, and cut me off;" and, speaking of the power of God as the efficient cause of all things, he says, "The hand of the Lord hath done this, in whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind."¹ The epithet "mighty" is added to suggest the idea of great, resistless energy.

To have the hand of God on a person, to be in his hand, or under his hand, does not necessarily indicate being in a state of affliction. It merely means that the power of God is exercised with regard to that person. Jehovah is said by Moses to "love his people;" and in a parallel clause he adds, "All his saints are in thy hand," protected by thy power. "The hand of our God," says Ezra, "is upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath

¹ Joh. vi. 9; xii. 10.

is against all them that forsake him. The hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy." The powerful inspiring influence of the Holy Spirit is described as the hand of the Lord being on the prophets, in the cases of Elijah and Ezekiel. But the phrase is very often used in a more specific sense, as descriptive of the power of God put forth for punishment or chastisement. It is said, "the hand of the Lord was heavy on the men of Ashdod," when he visited them with a severe judgment. "The hand of the Lord is on thy cattle," said Moses to Pharaoh, when he announced the plague of murrain. "Have pity on me," says Job, "Have pity on me, O my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me." "Day and night," says the Psalmist, "thy hand was heavy on me. Thine arrows stick to me; thy hand presseth me sore."¹ "Let me not fall into the hand of man, but into the hand of the Lord," said David, when called to choose whether war, or famine, or pestilence, was to be the punishment of his sin. Some interpreters consider the phrase before us, "under the mighty hand of God," as merely referring generally to the being entirely at the disposal of God, completely in his hand; but the use of the epithet mighty, and the contrast of the depressed state of the person *under* the mighty hand of God, with the state of elevation promised him if the temper of his mind properly correspond with his circumstances, as well as the succeeding context, all convince me that the Apostle had in his eye "the manifold trials," "the afflictions," to which, as a part of the Christian brotherhood in the world, those to whom he wrote were exposed. The thought which he wished to bring strongly before their mind is this: These afflictions to which you are exposed are the result of the Divine appointment and agency. Let us shortly illustrate that thought; it is an important one.

"Affliction cometh not forth of the dust; trouble doth

¹ Deut. xxxiii. 3. Ezra viii. 22, 31. 1 Kings xviii. 46. Ezek. i. 3. 1 Sam. v. 11. Exod. ix. 3. Job xix. 21. Psal. xxxiil. 4. 1 Chron. xxi. 13.

not spring from the ground." They "come down from above;" they "come forth from Him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."¹ There are many who think and feel in reference to afflictive dispensations, as the Philistines of old, when they said, "a chance hath happened us." But there is neither blind chance, nor unintelligent necessity, in God's world. "He worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." No event occurs apart from his plan, and the execution of his plan. "His counsel stands, and he doth all his pleasure."²

The doctrine of providence, a particular providence (for it is not very easy to understand what is meant by a general providence as opposed to a particular one), is supported by numerous and powerful arguments, deduced from rational principles, as well as from the declaration of inspired Scripture. Admit the wisdom, the power, and the omnipresence of the Divine Being, and you cannot consistently deny his providence. "Are not two sparrows," says our Lord, "sold for a farthing? yet one of them shall not fall to the ground without your heavenly Father: even the hairs of your head are all numbered."³ Can He who cares for sparrows, and numbers the hairs of our head, can he be inattentive to, or unconcerned in, what so closely concerns the honour of his character, and the highest interests of his people, as their afflictions?

The agency of God in the afflictions of his people is not only deducible from, or more properly involved in, the doctrine of his universal providence; but it is taught in the most explicit terms which language can furnish: "Shall there be evil," that is, suffering, affliction in any form, "in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" "I am the Lord, and there is none else; there is no God besides me. I form the light, and create the darkness; I make peace, and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things." "The Lord

¹ Job. v. 6. James i. 17. Isa. xxviii. 29.

² 1 Sam. vi. 9. Eph. i. 11. Isa. xlv. 10.

³ Luke xii. 7.

killeth, and maketh alive : he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich : he bringeth low, and he lifteth up." "See now that I, even I, am he ; there is no God with me. I kill, and I make alive ; I wound, and I heal : neither is there any who can deliver out of my hand." "He maketh sore, and bindeth up ; he woundeth, and his hands make whole." The person accidentally killed, as we phrase it, is by Moses said to be "delivered by God into the hands" of the person who unintentionally deprives him of life.¹

And as we are to consider those afflictions as proceeding from the hand of God, not merely when there appears to us no intermediate agent, whether physical or intelligent, as in the case of sudden death, or unaccountable accident ; but whatever be the immediate occasion, whether they occur from the operation of what we call natural causes, in the course of the established order of things, or from the agency of intelligent beings, human, angelic, or infernal, they are to be considered as coming forth from him "of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things."² The miraculous slaughter of Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, for whose punishment the Lord "made a new thing," and the death of those who through disease or old age were cut off in the wilderness, were equally the works of the Lord. Wars which spring from human passions, and are carried on through human instrumentality, equally with the famine and the pestilence, are numbered among the works of God ; and their ravages are "desolations which he makes in the earth."³ When adversity mingles its bitter ingredients in our cup, whatever these ingredients are, let us never forget that it is God who puts that cup into our hand. It matters not whether our affliction springs from those disastrous visitations in which the agency of man has no part, and over which it has no control, like that mysterious blight which

¹ Amos iii. 6. Isa. xlv. 7. 1 Sam. ii. 6. Deut. xxxii. 39. Job v. 18. Exod. xxi. 13.

² Rom. xi. 36.

³ Psal. xlv. 8.

has lately turned into rottenness so large a portion of the produce of our fields, and the food of the people; or arises from the improvidence, the injustice, or the cruelty of human beings; in either case they form a part of the administration of Him whose kingdom ruleth all. Job spoke like a philosopher as well as a saint; his words were those of wisdom as well as those of piety, when, after the Sabeans had carried away his oxen, the fire of God falling from heaven had consumed his sheep, the Chaldeans had robbed him of his camels, and murdered his servants, and a great wind from the wilderness had buried his children in the ruins of his eldest son's house, he said, "It is the Lord." The lightning and the tempest, the Sabeans and the Chaldeans, he considered, and rightly, as the instruments, the human beings, the guilty instruments of the execution of God's most holy and righteous appointment. "The Lord," said he, "gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."¹ And He of whose faith and patience Job offered but a faint resemblance, amid his unparalleled sufferings, proceeding in a great measure directly from the malignant agency of men and devils, looked beyond Judas and his band, Caiaphas and the chief priests, the denial of Peter and the flight of the disciples, Pontius Pilate and the Roman soldiers, the Prince of Darkness and his hosts, to Him whose high and holy determination they were unconsciously and most wickedly carrying into accomplishment, and with meek reverence and devout submission said, "The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it?"²

This important principle, that our afflictions are the work of God, seems the principal truth intended to be taught by the representation before us; a truth, the apprehension of which is absolutely necessary to the deriving of any spiritual advantage from affliction. A conviction of this will persuade us that our afflictions are not the effect of caprice, or of

¹ Job i. 21.

² John xviii. 11.

cruelty ; that they are the result of design, wise design, benignant design, sent to serve a purpose, a holy or benevolent purpose. The words seem farther to indicate what we are very ready to forget, that in affliction God is very near us. He is always so, ever at our right and left hand, intently looking on us ; but in affliction, to rouse us to the fact of his nearness, He, as it were, lays his hand on us ; and we are stupid indeed if we still continue inapprehensive of his presence. Affliction, as a laying God's hand on us, intimates not only that he is near us, but that he is actually dealing with us ; he has business with us, he has to do with us, and we have to do with him. He has accounts to settle with us ; He is not satisfied with us ; we are not what he would have us to be. If we were, he would not indeed let us alone ; that were a dreadful evil ; but he would interfere only to give new proofs of his love in new gifts of his grace ; his hand would never be on us for chastisement ; it would be on us only for good. He does not afflict willingly. If he gives us a blow, assuredly we deserve it. We have provoked it. It comes from a reluctant hand. Still farther, in the case of God's own people, and it is of them the Apostle is speaking, affliction, viewed as laying his hand on them, is a manifestation of kind interest in them. He has not given them up ; He means to make something of them ; He smites because he loves them ; He "chastens them for their profit." It is not the stroke of a cruel one ; it is not the hand of the destroyer. To vary the figure, affliction with them is as "the refiner's fire, and the fuller's soap." "He sits as a refiner and purifier of silver ; and he shall purify them and purge them as gold and silver, that they may be offered to the Lord an offering of righteousness."¹

§ 2.—*Our duty in affliction is to "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God."*

Having thus considered the Christian's state of affliction

¹ Heb. xii. 10. Mal. iii. 3.

as a state of subjection to God's chastening hand, let us now consider the corresponding view the Apostle gives of their duty: Christians are to "humble themselves under the mighty hand of God." The command is equivalent to "despise not the chastening of the Lord." Rebel not against it, fret not under it, murmur not at it, call not in question either Jehovah's right, or the manner in which he asserts it. Beware of doubting the wisdom, or the righteousness, or the kindness of the visitation. "Be still, and know that *He* is God." "Glorify the Lord in the fires." "Sanctify the Lord God in your heart." "Hear the rod, and Him who has appointed it."¹ The whole truth on this subject may be comprehended in the three injunctions—humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, as creatures under the hand of their Creator; as subjects under the hand of their Sovereign; as children under the hand of their Father.

(1.) *As creatures under the hand of the Creator.*

Christians should humble themselves in affliction as creatures under the hand of their Creator. Pride, and impatience, murmuring, rebellion under affliction, which all flow from pride, are absolutely monstrous in a creature under the hand of the Creator. What is the creature but what the Creator has made him? What has he but what God has given him? Is not he and all that he has far more the Creator's property than his own? Is he not, must he not be, ought he not to be, entirely dependent on, submissive to, Him who made him? "Hath not the potter power over the clay?" "Shall the clay say to him who fashioned it, What makest thou? or the work to him who formed it, Thou hast no hands?" "Shall the axe boast itself against him that heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up

¹ Psal. xlv. 10. Isa. xxiv. 15; viii. 13. Mic. vi. 9.

itself, as if it were no wood?"¹ In affliction we feel the touch of that hand which made us, and which can easily turn us to dust again. Surely, in these circumstances, it is meet to acknowledge that we are "nothing, less than nothing and vanity," before him "who was, and is, and is to come, the Almighty;" "of whom, through whom, to whom, are all things." We should even wonder that he takes so much notice of us as to send us salutary afflictions. "Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him! or the son of man, that thou makest account of him! that thou shouldest visit him every morning and try him every moment? Man who is like unto vanity; whose days are as a shadow that passeth away!"²

(2). *As subjects under the hand of their Sovereign—rebel subjects under the hand of their righteously offended Sovereign.*

Christians should humble themselves in affliction as subjects under the hand of their Sovereign, as rebel subjects under the hand of their righteously offended Sovereign. If creatures should be humble just because they are creatures, sinful creatures are tenfold bound to be humble. In the being sinners, every thing base and degrading is necessarily included. There is no folly like sin, no baseness like sin. Affliction is intended to bring sin to remembrance. We should never forget our guilt and depravity, and the state of condemnation and debasement into which they have brought us; but in the day of affliction we should especially say, "I remember my faults this day." I lay my hand on my mouth, my mouth in the dust, unclean, unclean. I have no ground of complaint, I can have none. I deserve no good. I deserve all evil. "It is of the Lord's mercies I am not consumed."³ Does it not become rebels justly doomed to death, spared by the clemency of their insulted, injured

¹ Rom. ix. 22. Isa. xlv. 9; x. 15.

² Psal. cxliv. 3, 4.

³ Lam. iii. 22.

sovereign, yet bearing ever on them distinct marks of their crime, and both of his unmerited clemency and just displeasure, does it not become them to be humble? Deep self-abasement is the becoming temper in him who knows that he has incurred the righteous displeasure of God by innumerable, unprovoked violations of the law that is holy, just, and good; and that in him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing. Deep self-abasement is the temper which becomes him at all times, and especially when he is under the mighty hand of God. However severe the afflictions, why should he murmur? Why should he complain? "A man for the punishment of sins," a man punished, but punished for less than his iniquities deserve? "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do so no more." The language of his heart should be, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and righteous are thy judgments. Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? O, thou observer of men. I have sinned, I have committed iniquity, I have done wickedly, I have rebelled by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments. O Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee, but to me confusion of face, because I have sinned against thee."¹ Thus does it become the sinner, under the mighty hand of God, to sit alone and keep silence, to put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope? This kind of humbling a person's self is just as becoming the converted as the unconverted man. It will for ever continue a fact that he has broken God's holy law, and had a thoroughly depraved nature; and the recollection of these facts, which affliction is intended to recall to the mind, should for ever hide pride from the Christian's eyes.

(3.) *As children under the hand of their Father.*

But the Christian stands to God in the relation, not only

¹ Lam. iii. 39. Job xxxiv. 31. Jer. xii. 1. Dan. ix. 5, 7.

of a creature to the Creator, not only of a subject to his sovereign, but also of a child to his Father. This is the peculiar relation in which the Christian stands to God ; and in this relation, in the season of affliction, he ought to “humble himself under the mighty hand of God.” Of all men, it least becomes the Christian to question the wisdom, or righteousness, or kindness of the Divine afflictive dispensations, to be fretful or unsubmitive under the mighty hand of God. He knows the character of him who inflicts chastisement ; he knows how richly he deserves chastisement ; he knows how much he stands in need of chastisement ; he knows the true nature and design of chastisement ; and therefore he ought to be distinguished by the humility of reverence, the humility of acquiescence, the humility of gratitude. He should humbly acknowledge the right of him who inflicts ; he has done nothing but what he has a good right to do. He should humbly acknowledge that the affliction was not uncalled for ; he has got nothing but what he deserves ; and that, however heavy, it might have been much heavier, without affording him cause either of surprise or complaint ; and he should humbly acknowledge his obligations to his Father in heaven, both for afflicting him and afflicting him in measure ; for sending the very afflictions in kind and degree, which infinite wisdom saw he needed, and which infinite faithfulness secures shall serve their purpose. I cannot conclude this part of the subject better than in the words of the Apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews, when he bids them not forget “the exhortation which speaketh unto them as to children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord”—that is, in other words, humble yourself under his mighty hand. “For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons ; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which cor-

rected us, and we *gave* them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?"¹

§ 3. *Motives to humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God.*

The motives which either implicitly or explicitly are here urged by the Apostle for Christians thus humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God, come now to be considered. They are the following:—

We ought thus to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, for this is just a particular form of that humility which God so complacently approves, and the opposite of which he so indignantly condemns. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves *therefore*, for this reason, under the mighty hand of God. We should humble ourselves under the hand of God just because it is the hand of God. We should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, because it is the *mighty* hand of God. Finally, we should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, because this is the appointed way of being exalted in due time.

(1.) *It is a part of the humility which God so complacently approves.*

We should humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, for this is a course of which God complacently approves; while the opposite is a course which he indignantly condemns. "He giveth grace," he manifests favour, towards those who humble themselves under the *mighty* hand; while he resists, he treats as enemies, those who despise his chastening, and rebel under the rod. This is a most powerful motive. What makes any thing duty but its being according to the will of God, made known to us; what makes any thing sin but its being opposed to the will of God, made known to me? Besides, the conscious possession

¹ Heb. xii. 5-9.

of the cordial love, the complacent approbation of the greatest and wisest and best Being in the universe, arising out of constant manifestations of his favour, is the highest happiness a creature can enjoy. It is the essence of the happiness of holy angels and the spirits of the just made perfect. On the other hand, to be resisted, opposed, treated as an enemy by Him, is the greatest evil a creature can be exposed to ; it is the essence of the miseries of devils and lost human beings.

(2.) *It is the hand of GOD we are called to humble ourselves under.*

We should humble ourselves under the hand of God, just because it is the hand of God. We should be humble in reference to God, because he is *God*, infinitely great, wise, and holy ; because he is our Creator, our Governor, our Judge, our Father ; because we are entirely dependent on him ; because we are pensioners on his bounty ; because we have incurred his displeasure, and are completely at his mercy. Humility should therefore be our habitual temper towards God ; but when we are visited with affliction, when his hand is on us, these truths are more directly and powerfully presented to the mind. We are brought near God. He who despises the chastisement of the Lord, as it were, insults the Sovereign at a personal interview. He defies the Almighty even when he appears whetting his sword and bending his bow. “ He stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty. He runneth on him, even on his neck, on the thick bosses of his buckler.”¹

(3.) *It is the mighty hand of God we are called to humble ourselves under.*

Christians ought to humble themselves under the hand of God, for that hand is mighty. Mighty to smite still harder, if the strokes given do not serve their purpose.

¹ Job xv. 26.

Mighty to deliver from, as well as to inflict evil. There is no striving with success against him. As Archbishop Leighton says, "It is a vain thing to flinch and struggle, for he doth what he will; and his hand is so mighty, that the greatest power of the creature is nothing to it; yea, it is all indeed derived from him, and therefore cannot do any whit against him. If thou wilt not yield, thou must yield; if thou wilt not lead, thou shalt be pulled and drawn; therefore, submission is your only course."

(4.) *To humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, is the appointed way of our being in due time exalted.*

Finally, Christians should humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, for this is the appointed way to their being exalted. "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that ye may be exalted." That humility leads to exaltation, as pride to degradation, is a sentiment often expressed in Scripture. "Before honour is humility." "A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit." "He that exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."¹ In the providential dealings of God, as recorded in his Word, we have many very remarkable instances of humbling a person's self under the mighty hand of God, leading to deliverance from calamity, and restoration to prosperity. When the princes of Israel, on the desolations occasioned by the invasion of Shishak, king of Egypt, "humbled themselves, and said, The Lord is righteous;" when "the Lord saw that they had humbled themselves," he said, by his prophet Shemaiah, "They have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance." When their prince, king Rehoboam, "humbled himself, the wrath of God turned from him: also in Judah things went well." When the king of Nineveh and his people humbled themselves under the mighty hand of God

¹ Prov. xv. 33; xxix. 23. Luke xiv. 11.

lifted up to smite them, "He repented of the evil he had said he would do to them," and the impending stroke was averted. When Hezekiah "humbled himself for the pride of his heart," in the matter of the Babylonian ambassadors, the threatened wrath of the Lord came not on him. When Manassch was, for his enormous transgressions, "bound with fetters and taken to Babylon, he in affliction besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his Fathers, and prayed to him; and He was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God." When even Ahab, to whom "there was none like, who did sell himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord," humbled himself, Jehovah said to Elijah, "Because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days." And to notice but one other instance, when Nebuchadnezzar, who, for his pride, was bereft both of his reason and of his power, employed the first effort of returning intelligence in humbling himself under the mighty hand of God, "the glory of his kingdom, his honour and brightness returned to him; he was established in his kingdom; and excellent majesty was added to him."¹

This part of the Divine government is beautifully described by Elihu. "To hide pride from man, he is chastened with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong pain: so that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat. His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones which were not seen stick out. Yea, his soul draweth near to the grave, and his life to the destroyer. If there be a messenger with him, one among a thousand, to show unto him His," that is, God's, "uprightness; then he is gracious to him, and saith, Deliver from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom. His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth. He shall pray to God, and he shall be favourable

¹ 2 Chron. xii. 7, 12. Jon. ii. 5-10. 2 Chron. xxxii. 26; xxxiii. 12. 1 Kings xxi. 29. Dan. iv. 34-37.

to him ; and he will see his face with joy. He looketh upon man ; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that **which was right**, and it profited me not ; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.” “If men be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction ; then he showeth them their work, and their transgressions wherein they have exceeded. He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasure : but if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge.” “Such as sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron ; because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High : therefore he brought down their heart with labour : they fell down, and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men ! For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted : their soul abhorreth all manner of meat ; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men ! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.”¹

¹ Job xxxiii. 17-29 ; xxxvi. 8-12. Psal. cvii. 10-22.

The Christian's humbling himself under the mighty hand of God always leads to his exaltation. Frequently, the affliction, having served one of its leading purposes, which was to humble him, and make him humble himself before God, is removed, and prosperity comes in the room of adversity. At other times, though the affliction may not be removed, or though it may be one of those irreparable losses we so often meet with, the heaviness, the painful depression which it occasioned, is removed.

Humility brings in its train patience, long-suffering, and hope; and, even though not delivered from suffering, he who has humbled himself under the mighty hand of God, is so lifted up by that hand as to "joy in tribulation." "His heart is lifted up in the good ways of the Lord." The Christian, who, while he could not humble himself, could not bring his mind to God's mind, his will to God's will, was tossed as in a sea of trouble, is no sooner enabled to humble himself under the mighty hand of God, to kiss the rod, to say, "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in thy sight," than the storm is turned into a calm; and it may be, amid unabated external suffering, he has perfect peace, submitting himself to God, staying himself on God.

It is the purpose of God ultimately to exalt his people far above the reach of evil, in all its forms and in all its degrees. The humble, patient suffering of his will, equally with active, persevering doing of his will, is the appointed way to that final exaltation; and the degree in which the people of God are to be exalted, will be proportioned to their attainments in holiness, among which, humbling themselves under his mighty hand occupies an important place. This is an exercise that not only precedes, but prepares for that exaltation to which it is his purpose to raise them.

The exaltation promised as the result of humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God, is said to be exaltation in due time. When the affliction has served its purpose, "when they shall confess their iniquity," says Jehovah, in reference to his cast off people; when their uncircum-

cised hearts shall be humbled, "and they accept of the punishment of their iniquity, then will I remember my covenant;" in due time, in God's time. "Not thy fancied time," as Leighton says, "but his own wisely appointed time. Thou thinkest, I am sinking; if he help not now, it will be too late. He can let thee sink still lower, and yet bring thee up again. He doth but stay till the most fit time. 'He waiteth to be gracious.' Doth he wait, and wilt not thou? If he should see fit to keep us under a cloud all our days on the earth, what then? it's but a moment of wrath, to be succeeded by an endless life-time in his favour; it is but sorrow for a night, and in the due time comes joy in the morning; that eternal morning without clouds, to which no night succeeds for ever." So much for an illustration of the Apostle's view of the Christian's state of affliction as a state of subjection to the mighty hand of God, and of the corresponding view of his duty in this state, and the motives which urge to its performance.

These remarks have been addressed almost exclusively to the people of God. But I cannot conclude this part of the subject without expressing my sympathy with those irreligious men who are under the mighty hand of God, and of offering them a word of counsel. It is an awful thing to be under the mighty hand of God, while we are lying under the curse of his holy law. Such a person is in the grasp of an almighty hand, which can, and which, unless a change takes place in his spiritual state and character, will cast him into hell. All he suffers now, is nothing in comparison to what he shall suffer for ever and ever. The bed of sickness, languishing, and pain, is ill to bear. How will it be with you when you must make your bed in hell? God's hand is heavy now. What will it be then? He lays it on you *now*, irreligious sufferers, that he may not require to lay it on you *then*. For he has no pleasure in your death. Alas! how often does "God speak once, yea twice, yet man regardeth it not." Even when he lays his hand on men, few say, "Where is God my maker?" They do not pray to *him* when

they are constrained to "howl upon their beds." Oh that they were wise!¹ Hear the rod. Its voice to every thoughtless sufferer is, Humble thyself, acknowledge thy guilt, thy depravity, thy helplessness, and cry for mercy. Submit to the will of God. There is no hope for thee but in this. Submit to his will, as to the way of salvation through his Son; as to the requisitions of his law, holy and good; as to the dispensations of his righteous and wise providence. Humble yourselves in submission to this will of God, and all will yet be well with you, well with you for ever. No affliction will then be intolerable. Every affliction will produce sweet and salutary fruit; fruit to holiness, and the end will be everlasting life. But what will be the consequence if ye do not humble yourselves under his mighty hand; if ye do not unreservedly submit to the overtures of his mercy, to the injunctions of his law, to the appointments of his providence?

Take the truth in the forcible words of a divine of a former age: "His hand, to which ye will not submit, is a mighty, an almighty hand. Have ye an arm like God? or can ye thunder with a voice like him? He whose will ye oppose is incontrollably powerful. His will must prevail one way or other, either with your will, or against it; either so as to bow and satisfy us, or so as to break and plague us; for 'my counsel,' saith he, 'shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.'² As to his dispensations, we may fret, we may wail, we may bark at them; but we cannot alter or avoid them. Sooner may we by our moans check the tides, or by our cries stop the sun in his course, than divert the current of affairs, or change the state of things established by God's high decree. What he layeth on, no hand can remove. What he hath destined, no power can reverse: our anger, therefore, will be ineffectual; our impatience will have no other fruit than to aggravate our guilt, and augment our grief. As to his commands, men

¹ Job xxxiii. 14; xxxv. 10. Hos. vii. 14.

² Isa. xlvi. 12.

may lift up themselves against him ; they may fight stoutly ; they may in a sort prove conquerors ; but it will be a miserable victory, the trophies whereof will be erected in hell, and stand on the ruins of their happiness ; for while they insult over abused grace, they must fall under incensed justice. If God cannot fairly procure his will of men in the way of due obedience, he will surely execute his will upon them in the way of righteous vengeance ; if we do surrender our wills to the overtures of his goodness, we must submit our backs to the strokes of his anger. He must reign over us ; if not as over loyal subjects to our comfort, yet as over stubborn rebels to our confusion ; for this, in that case, will be our doom, and these will be the last words God will deign to spend upon us : ‘ Those, mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither and slay them before me.’ ”¹

“ Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtiness of men be bowed down ; and the Lord alone be exalted.” “ Hear ye, and give ear ; be not proud : for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. What will ye say when he shall punish thee ? ”² To all, then, whether saints or sinners, when visited with calamitous dispensations of providence, we proclaim, “ Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”

II. SECOND VIEW OF AFFLICTION, AND ITS DUTY.

Let us now contemplate for a little, affliction in the second view here given us of it, as a state of anxiety and carefulness ; the appropriate duty of the Christian in this

¹ Barrow.

² Isa. ii. 10. Jer. xiii. 16, 21.

state, casting all his care on God; and the motive for performing this duty, God cares for him.

§ 1. *Affliction is a state of anxiety and carefulness.*

Let us, then, for a little, consider affliction as a state of carefulness; a state fitted to excite painful anxieties and fears. When the afflicted Christian is called to cast all his cares on God, it is obviously supposed that he has cares, many cares, distressing cares, cares which he feels that he cannot himself bear. The life of man, the life of the Christian man, even in its most prosperous state, is not without its cares and anxieties. Its enjoyments are at once imperfect and uncertain. Man has by no means all the things necessary to his happiness, nor any one of them in the measure in which he feels to be desirable; so that he naturally wishes for what he has not, and his wishes in proportion to their ardour, and the difficulties which seem to lie in the way of their being gratified, become painful anxieties. Besides, the tenure by which he holds most of these things is very precarious; they may soon, they may suddenly, be diminished, or entirely withdrawn from him; so that, if the mind is not under the influence of that thoughtlessness which blinds it from all possible or probable hazard, or of that enlightened religious principle which raises it above the fear of such hazards when distinctly discerned, even a life of prosperity would seem necessarily to be a life of carefulness. But while every situation in human life may afford occasion for carefulness, there can be no doubt that the season of affliction is peculiarly calculated to excite painful anxieties. The mind gets into an anxious state; every thing assumes a dark, discouraging, alarming aspect. 'How am I to sustain present evils, or how am I to escape from them? How am I to avert apparently coming evils? and, if they cannot be averted, How am I to endure them?' These are questions which force themselves on the suffering mind; and most sufferers will readily acknowledge that the fruitless attempt to get satisfactory answers to them, has often

greatly aggravated the pressure of external calamity, and that the anxieties occasioned by affliction have been felt to be a more insupportable burden than the affliction itself.¹

The case of affliction which the text naturally brings before the mind, that of a Christian exposed to persecution on account of his religion, is one which is calculated to be peculiarly fertile in harassing cares and perplexing anxieties. 'Spoiled as I am already, or am likely soon to be, of my goods, how am I to meet my engagements, and provide things honest in the sight of all men? What is to become of my family, to provide for whom is one of the most clearly enjoined, strongly enforced, of Christian duties? How am I to be enabled to sustain the sufferings to which I am likely to be exposed? How am I to be enabled distinctly to see my duty? How am I to be enabled determinedly to do my duty? I am afraid I shall not be able to stand in the evil day. I am afraid my faith will fail, and that I shall make shipwreck of a good conscience; and then what will be the fearful result of this to the cause of truth? How will its enemies exult? How will its friends be ashamed? What will be the more fearful result of this to my own weak, guilty soul? The anguish of an outraged conscience, the frown of an insulted Saviour; and all this for ever.' And anxieties of this kind could not be confined to the individual's own case; they naturally extended to the whole brotherhood, and to the great cause. This is the case, I apprehend, more immediately in the Apostle's view; and it is easy to see that persons placed in these circumstances were likely to have anxieties, many anxieties, oppressive anxieties. But it is obvious that affliction in all its forms is a natural source of painful carefulness to all, even to the Christian. The questions, How shall I be strengthened to endure those afflictions? how shall I be enabled to conduct myself aright to-

¹ This state of mind is very beautifully described by the poet:—

" Magno curarum fluctuat æstu,
Atque animum celerem nunc huc nunc dividit illuc,
In partesque rapit varias, perque omnia versat."—VIRGIL.

wards God and man under them? am I ever to be delivered from them? and if so, how? and if not, what are likely to be their consequences to me and to others? These are inquiries which are involuntarily pressed on the consideration of the mind, and it becomes careful and troubled, perplexed and fearful, oppressed and downcast.

§ 2. *The duty of the Christian under affliction is to “cast all his care on God.”*

The duty of the Christian under the pressure of affliction, viewed in this aspect, is to “cast all his care on God.” The language is figurative, strongly figurative. These harassing cares and anxieties are represented as a burden, which is felt to be oppressively heavy; and the sinking sufferer is represented as so transferring them to God, as to obtain relief from their painful pressure. The figure is still more fully brought out in the passage in the Old Testament Scriptures here referred to, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.”¹ Casting our cares on God, is descriptive of such actings of the mind towards God as shall have an effect in giving it a relief, analogous to that ease of body which the transference of a load to another person procures to him who was previously bent down by it. The figurative expression “cast,” not lay, seems to intimate that the duty enjoined is one that requires an effort; and experience tells us it is no easy matter to throw off the burden of carefulness. To describe the state of mind indicated by this figurative expression, and show how the Christian is to find his way into it, are the objects I have in view in the following observations.

To think rightly on this subject, it is of primary importance that we have distinct ideas respecting the true nature of those cares, *all* of which the afflicted Christian is called on to cast on God. There are cares and anxieties which originate in cherishing false views as to what is necessary

¹ Psal. lv. 22.

and conducive to happiness in ourselves and others ; and in unlawful, inordinate desires, corresponding with these false views. There are very many such cares and anxieties in the world. Indeed, they are all but universal. " Surely every man walketh in a vain show ; they disquiet themselves in vain."¹ Men are anxious to obtain what, if they thought and felt rightly, they would never have desired ; and that is the object of fear, which, were they not blinded by passion or false views of interest, would occasion no alarm, but rather be the object of hope. This is the character of the greater part of the worldling's anxieties, and it is the character also of but too many of the Christian's. These cares are not to be cast on God : they are to be cast away from us. We are not to go to him in the hope that he will gratify such desires, disappoint such fears, realize such hopes. To ask him to do this, were to insult him. If we take them to him at all, and we cannot do better, it ought to be as his enemies and ours, to slay them before his face.

There are other cares which we are not warranted to cast on God, for another reason. God has laid them on us, and he expects that we shall bear them. God would have his people without carefulness, in the sense of painful, useless anxiety. But he would not have them without thoughtfulness, in the sense of considerate reflection. We are bound to exercise those faculties God has given us, for discovering what is truth and what is falsehood, what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is evil. We are not to resign ourselves to mental inactivity, and to expect that in some miraculous way, without our own agency, God is to lead us unto truth, and preserve us from error ; show us what is duty, and what is sin ; give us what is fitted to make us happy, and defend us from all that is fitted to injure us. It is in the eager, I had almost said anxious, employment of our faculties as intelligent beings, on the revelation which God has made of his will, in his word, and in his providence,

¹ Psal. xxxix. 6.

that we are to expect to find out what is the course of conduct we should follow in any particular case; and it is in the persevering diligent employment of our faculties as active beings, carrying into effect the conclusion to which we have arrived, that we are to expect to obtain the desired results. We are warranted to look up to him for the aids of his good Spirit, both in our inquiries and in our exertions. But we are not to expect him to do that directly which his infinitely wise plan, and our real interests, equally require should be done by us. The Apostle does not mean to encourage inconsideration, indolence, or presumption, when he enjoins Christians to cast all their cares on God. It has been well said, We must not cast our work on God, and presume that he will save us in the way of sloth and carnal indulgence; on the contrary, we are commanded to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling." It is only "in well-doing" that we can "commit the keeping of our souls to God."¹

The cares and anxieties spoken of here, have a reference to what properly belongs to God, what lies beyond the range of human agency. All the cares of a Christian, whether in a state of affliction or otherwise, whether respecting secular or spiritual things, the body or the soul, time or eternity, of this kind, must refer, I apprehend, either to duties or to events.

As to duties, the Christian is apt to be anxious and careful as to the discovery of what is duty, and the discharge of what is known to be duty. As to the first he is carefully to use the means God has appointed for discovering his duty. He is to read his Bible, he is to attend to the aspect of Providence, he is to compare the one with the other, he is to ask the guidance of the Spirit, he is to guard against false biases, he is to see that his eye is single that his whole body may be full of light; but he is not to be anxious as if, doing all this, he shall yet be left in darkness, and allowed to fall into error or sin. He is to cast all such cares

¹ Phil. ii. 12. 1 Pet. iv. 19.

on the Lord. They refer to his work, and he has pledged himself to do it ; and we may be assured he will not fail to do as he has said. But the Christian may be anxious also about the performance of known duty. In this case he is carefully to guard against temptations to neglect duty ; but he is not to indulge in any anxiety as to whether he will be enabled, trusting in God, to perform any duty, however difficult, to which God may be pleased to call him. That is God's concern ; why does he burden himself with it ? He will look after the accomplishment of his own promise. "My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength shall be perfected in weakness ;" and let the Christian, in the full assurance of this, with an earnest, determined, but unanxious mind, set about the performance of the difficult, perhaps at the time apparently impossible, work.

As to events, they, properly speaking, belong entirely to God. Man proposes ; God disposes. To man some events seem desirable, others undesirable ; and, so far as we are concerned in the matter, we are to use such lawful means as seem to us best fitted to further events, which, with the widest and most accurate view we can take of them, seem to be desirable ; and, when they have done this, their own anxiety should cease. Our care should be cast upon God, who "worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will," whose "work is perfect," "most honourable, and glorious."¹ This is the duty of the Christian respecting all the events of time, and all the events of eternity, both in reference to himself individually, and to all with whom he is connected ; with regard to the church, and with regard to the world. With regard to *duty*, we ought to cast on Him all our care and anxiety as to skill to discover it, and strength to perform it ; and as to *events*, we ought to trust him with them entirely.

In order to thus casting our cares on God, there are plainly required three things :—1. A persuasion that God has com-

¹ Psal. cxi. 3.

plete control in reference to those things which excite our anxiety ; 2. A persuasion that he will use this control in the best manner, abstractly considered ; and 3. A persuasion that he will use this control in the best possible manner, so far as I am concerned.

(1.) *A persuasion that God has power to control what excites our anxiety.*

I could not get rid of painful anxiety by casting it on God, if I did not believe he could sustain it. What lies at the very foundation here is, that God is Sovereign of the universe, uncontrolled and uncontrollable, "whose kingdom rules over all," "who can do every thing," "whose arm none can stay, to whom none dare say, What dost thou?" whose ends his enemies further by opposing them, who "makes their wrath to praise him, and who restrains the remainder thereof."

(2.) *A persuasion that God will employ his controlling power in the best possible way.*

But though I had entire conviction of the Divine power, I could not cast my care, all my care, on him, unless I believed that his power was guided by wisdom and righteousness, and influenced by benignity. A belief of a being possessed of infinite power, if I were not sure of his being also a being possessed of infinite wisdom and righteousness, would increase, not diminish, my anxieties. But the clear apprehension that He who has all things under his control is perfect in knowledge, infinite in wisdom, glorious in holiness, plentiful in justice, and full of kindness, must persuade me that his management of every thing must be the best possible.

(3.) *A persuasion that he will employ his controlling power in the best possible way for me.*

It might be thought that this conviction of absolute intellectual and moral perfection, in combination with almighty

power, should be **quite** enough to enable me, quite enough morally to compel **me**, to cast all my care on God; that in the presence of **such** convictions anxieties of every kind would cease. But **no!** I am a sinner. I have offended this infinitely powerful, and wise, and excellent Being, and the very excellence of his nature may render certain those events, anxiety about which can only be quieted by an assurance that they never shall take place. I must be persuaded that this control which he possesses will be exercised not only in the best possible way in the abstract, but in the best way for me. In other words, I must know and believe him to be my Friend. I must know that he is "pacified towards me for all the iniquity which I have done." I must believe his own testimony, that he has no pleasure in my death; that he is "in Christ reconciling the world to himself;" that "for the great love wherewith he loves men, he blesses them with all heavenly and spiritual blessings." I must, on the faith of his testimony, lay hold of his promise, and believe that to me, trusting in him, he will do all that he has said, make all things work for my good, and bestow on me the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory.

Wherever there is, and in the degree in which there is, the possession of this threefold persuasion, we learn to cast our cares on God; and we find that, by doing so, we are relieved of them. When we are thus "anxious about nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication make our requests known to God, the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus." It is then in believing prayer that the afflicted, anxious Christian, is to cast his cares on God.

"This is the way," as good Leighton says, "to walk contentedly and cheerfully homewards, leaning and resting all the way on him who is both our guide and our guard, our wisdom and our strength, who hath us and all our good in his gracious hand. The more tender and weak we are, the more tender will he be of us, the more strong will he be in us. He feeds his flock as a shepherd, and the weakest he is

most careful of. They go in his arms and bosom, and it is easy for the feeblest so to go."

In reference to events, the more completely we rid ourselves of all anxiety, we act the more reasonably and wisely. It is entirely his province to manage them. If we meddle with it, and we are constantly meddling with it, we displease him and disquiet ourselves. This sin carries its punishment in its bosom. "If thou wilt," says the pious prelate, "be struggling with that which belongs not to thee, and poising at that burden which is not thine, what wonder, yea, I may say, what pity if thou fall under it? Is it not just, if thou wilt do for thyself, and bear for thyself what thy Lord calls for to bear for thee, is it not just that thou feel the weight of it to thy cost?"

There is just one other thought to which I would solicit your attention before closing this part of the subject. The Christian must beware of laying his cares on any but God. He must cast all his cares on God. He may seek the sympathy and the advice of his fellow-Christians; but he must never cast his cares, or place his confidence on them. They cannot bear the burden. They are obliged to cast their own cares on God. "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." He well understood the blessed art of casting all his care on God, who said, "My soul, wait thou only on God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Ye people, place your confidence in him continually; pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us."¹

Finally, here, in the right state of mind under affliction, the two things recommended by the Apostle must be conjoined, "Humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God," and "Casting all our cares upon him." Our self-abasement must not lead to despondency, but to deeper de-

¹ Psal. lxii. 5-8.

said, Judas "cared not for the poor."¹ "He cares for you" is equivalent to, He takes a kind interest in you.

Now that God does, must take a peculiar and most benignant interest in his people, will be very plain, if we attend for a moment to the peculiar relation in which he stands to them, the peculiar works he has done for them, the peculiar privileges he has bestowed on them, and the peculiar "exceeding great and precious promises" he has made to them.

What is the relation in which God stands to them? He is their God and Father; they are his people and children, in a sense quite peculiar. They were "predestinated to the adoption of children;" and when he called them out of the world, by the power of his Spirit attending the invitation of his word, he said, "I will be a father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." "Behold," may "this chosen generation, this holy nation, this peculiar people," say, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God!"² The title is not an empty name. There is great force in the Apostle's argument, "If children, then heirs."³ If you stand in the relation of children to God, you may be sure of the treatment of children. Is it possible that our Father in heaven should not care for his children? "If ye, being evil," says our Lord, "know how to give good gifts to your children; how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to them that ask him?" "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him. He knows their frame; he remembers they are dust."⁴

What has God done for, what has he given to his peculiar people? He "chose them before the foundation of the world." He "commended his love to them, in that, when they were yet sinners, Christ died for them." He "spared not his Son, but delivered him up for their offences, and raised him again for their justification," and set him at his own right hand,

¹ John x. 13; xii. 6.

² Eph. i. 5. 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. 1 John iii. 1.

³ Rom. viii. 17.

⁴ Psal. ciii. 13, 14.

that, ever living to make intercession for them, he might be able to save them to the uttermost. For them he poured out the Holy Ghost in his miraculous and inspiring influence, and diffused his gospel and established his ordinances throughout the earth. This is a specimen of what he has done for them. And what has he given them? He has "blessed them with all heavenly and spiritual blessings;" he has bestowed on them "redemption in Christ through his blood, according to the riches of his grace;" he has made them "accepted in the beloved;" he has conferred on them "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not, reserved in heaven for them," while he keeps them by his power, through faith, unto salvation; he has given them the Holy Spirit in his sanctifying and comforting influences of their charter, as the seal and the earnest of their inheritance; he has sent forth his angels, who excel in strength, as "ministering spirits, to minister to them as heirs of this great salvation;" he has delivered them from the present evil world, and from the power of the wicked one, and given them "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." Surely he who has done all this for them, and given all this to them, does, must care for them. For these "gifts and callings are without repentance." He "rests on his love," and is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."¹

Still farther, what has he promised them, or rather, what has he not promised them, which could show his care for them? He has promised that he will "withhold no good thing from them;" that "it shall be well with them;" that "their desire shall be granted," and that "their hope shall be gladness." He has declared that theirs is the world, and that they "shall inherit all things;" and promised to "supply all their need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." He has a promise which meets every anxiety which can arise in their heart. Are they anxious as to strength to

¹ Eph. i. 4. Rom. v. 8; viii. 32; iv. 25. Heb. vii. 25. Eph. i. 3, 6, 7. 1 Pet. i. 4, 5. Eph. i. 13. Psal. xci. 11. Heb. i. 14. Gal. i. 4. 2 Thess. ii. 16. Rom. xi. 29.

perform duty? he says, "My grace is sufficient for you." "God will work in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in my name." Are they anxious as to guidance in difficulty? "I will lead the blind in a way that they know not; I will make darkness light before them." "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shouldest go." Are they afraid of falling before their spiritual enemies, and ultimately coming short of eternal life? He who is the Father's substantial image says, "I give to my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave me them, is greater than all; and none can pluck them out of my Father's hand." "God, who is faithful, will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able to bear; and will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." "Satan shall be bruised under your feet shortly." And as to events: Are they anxious about affliction? "He shall deliver thee in six troubles, in seven no evil shall touch thee." "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the floods they shall not overflow thee. When thou passest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flames kindle on thee." "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." In every situation in life fitted to excite anxiety, there are appropriate promises which I cannot stop to enumerate. To his people, when in poverty, in famine, bereaved of relations, spoiled of their possessions, misrepresented and calumniated, promises singularly suited to their circumstances are made, all proving that he cares for them, that in all their afflictions he is as it were afflicted, and that they who touch them, touch as it were the apple of his eye.¹

¹ Psal. lxxxiv. 11. Eccles. viii. 8. Isa. iii. 10. Psal. cxlv. 19. Prov. x. 24, 28. 1 Cor. iii. 22. Rom. iv. 13. Rev. xxi. 7. Phil. iv. 19. 2 Cor. xii. 9. Phil. ii. 13. Zech. x. 12. Isa. xlii. 16. Psal. xxxii. 8. John x. 28, 29. 1 Cor. x. 13. Rom. xvi. 20. Job v. 19. Isa. xlii. 2. Rom. viii. 28. Isa. lxiii. 9. Zech. ii. 8.

Are they anxious about death, and what is to follow death ? He shows that he cares for them by promising, that when they “walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he will be with them ; his rod and his staff they shall sustain them.” “He will swallow up death in victory.” “I will ransom them from the power of the grave ; I will redeem them from death. O death ! I will be thy plague : O grave ! I will be thy destruction.” “This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality ; and death shall be swallowed up in victory.” The Saviour shall come from heaven, and “change these vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body ;” and they “shall be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and they shall be for ever with the Lord.” “He who testifieth these things is a true and faithful witness.” He cannot be deceived ; he cannot deceive. “He is not a man, that he should lie.” He means all he says ; he can and will do all he promises.¹ Does he not, then, care for his people ? Do not the relation he has assumed towards them, the works he has performed for them, the privileges he has bestowed on them, and the promises so exceeding great and precious that he has made about them and to them, abundantly prove the assertion in the text, “He cares for them ?”

It will not require many words to show, that this truth, so abundantly demonstrated, is a most powerful and appropriate motive to the Christian’s casting his care, all his care, upon God. Why should he allow the burden that so oppresses and depresses him, that so interferes both with his duty and his comfort, to remain on him ? He knows very well that these anxieties can be of no use to him ; they refer to matters that he cannot control. His anxieties, however intense, do not bring him one whit nearer the object of his hope, or remove him one whit farther from the object of his fear. But, to obtain relief from anxiety, I must not only

¹ Psal. xxiii. 4. Isa. xxv. 8. Hos. xiii. 14. 1 Cor. xv. 53-57. Phil. iii. 20, 21. 1 Thess. iv. 17.

be convinced that my anxiety is useless,—a conviction of this, if I do not see some way of getting rid of the evils which occasion it, will but fix the burden more firmly on me. But the Christian who knows that God cares for him, knows that his anxieties are not only useless, they are needless. God, who has the entire management of those matters which excite his anxieties, God cares for him. And who is this who cares for the Christian? He is the all-wise, the only wise God, who never can be deceived as to what is the Christian's true interest, and who knows how to make all things work together for good. He never can fall into any mistake as to what is good for his people, nor as to the means best fitted for securing this good to them. Then he is God Almighty, the all-powerful God. "Whatsoever he pleaseth, that doth he in heaven, in the earth, and in all deep places." He never can want power to execute what his wisdom deems to be best for those he cares for. When a Christian is "afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man who shall be made as the grass," surely it is in momentary forgetfulness that He who cares for him is "the Lord his maker, who stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; the Lord God who divided the seas, whose waters roared; the Lord of Hosts is his name." Then he is God, ever present, omnipresent; nothing can overtake you in his absence. The connexion in the parallel passage in Philippians iv. 5, 6, deserves to be marked. "The Lord is at hand; be careful for nothing." Then still farther; He is "the God of all grace;" "the Father of mercies." He who cares for you, has his wisdom and power influenced and guided by infinite love, infinite love to you. Hear his own words, which are as true in reference to every one of his people individually, as in reference to their collective body, the church. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, she may forget, yet will not I forget thee." This love will keep wisdom ever wakeful, power ever active, in reference to the true interests of its objects. Is not anxiety, then,

on the part of the Christian, a very needless, and therefore a very unreasonable thing. Surely it is very unwise in him not to cast his care on God.¹

But it is worse than unwise, it is ungrateful and undutiful. When God says, 'Leave these matters which you cannot manage to my management,' if we refuse, what is it but to insult our Divine benefactor by discovering doubts of his sincerity, or of his wisdom, or of his power? Whether would the ingratitude or the folly of the Levite of Mount Ephraim have been greater, if he had met the generous invitation of the hospitable old man of Gibeah, "Let all thy wants lie on me, only lodge not in the street," with a sullen refusal? And when the greatest and best of all beings says to us, who are but dust and ashes, Let all your wants lie upon me, wants, we well know, we cannot supply, but he can, where shall we find words to describe the baseness and the absurdity of putting away from us so generous, so needed a boon? Is it a fitting return for all his kindness, to insist on keeping hold of a burden which he is willing to release us of, when getting rid of that burden is necessary to enable us to yield him the cheerful, ready, joyful service he so well deserves? Surely when he says, I would have you without carefulness, that ye may serve me without fear in righteousness and holiness all the days of your lives, the sense of his kindness and the desire of his glory should equally lead us to comply with the command, "Cast all your care on God." Indeed, wherever the proposition, God the infinitely powerful, wise, and benignant Sovereign of the universe cares for me, is interested in my welfare, and pledges to secure it, is understood and believed, in the degree in which it is understood and believed, it does, it must banish carefulness and anxiety from the mind. Here, as in so many other cases, it is with a man according to his faith. Oh, how happy, oh, how holy, would we be! how easy would labour be, how light affliction! could we but, believing that God cares for us, "cast all our care

¹ Psal. cxxxv. 6. Isa. li. 12, 15; xlix. 15.

on him," saying, "I am poor and needy ; but the Lord thinketh on me ! Thou art my help and deliverer, O my God !" ¹

Thus have I turned your attention to affliction as a state calculated to excite anxiety and carefulness ; to the afflicted Christian's duty in reference to this view of affliction,—to cast all his anxieties on God ; and to the motive urging him to this course,—God cares for him.

This is the duty of the Christian at all times, and the motive is equally powerful in all circumstances. The inward ear of the Christian should ever be open to these words, so full of wisdom, so full of love of the great Master. "Take no thought ; be not careful ; anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink ; nor for your body, what ye shall put on : Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment ? Behold the fowls of the air : for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? Which of you, by taking thought, by anxiety, can add one cubit to his stature, or, as it has been explained, one moment to his life ? And why take ye thought for raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow : they toil not, neither do they spin ; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed as one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven ; will he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith ? Therefore, take no thought, be not anxious, saying, What shall we eat ? or what shall we drink ? and wherewithal shall we be clothed ? (for after all these things the Gentiles seek,) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added to you. Fear not, little flock ; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." ²

There is a class, a large class of men, and it is very likely

¹ Psal. xl. 17.

² Luke xii. 22-32.

there are some of them here, to whom I can neither address the exhortation nor the encouragement in the text in the true sense, that which I have endeavoured to bring out to you ; to whom I dare not say, Cast your care, all your care, ay, any of your care on God ; to whom I cannot say, God cares for *you* in the way in which he cares for his own, for them who know and believe in him and love him, for they are none of his. His creatures they are, but his disobedient creatures ; his subjects, but his rebellious subjects ; they are not his children, they are not his people. There are men whose anxieties are all engaged about worldly, many of them about sinful, objects. Even with their very low notions of the Divine character, they themselves would be ashamed to take their cares and anxieties to God in prayer, and try to cast them on him. They feel that it would be to insult him to do so. Their inward feeling is, the less God hears of such things the better. They are cares he would never take off their hand, and undertake for. And though there is a sense in which God's mercies, God's tender mercies, are over all his works, in which he cares for all ; yet, with regard to those who are living in unbelief and disobedience, it is quite plain that, remaining in that state, what they have to depend on is not pledged covenant love. Their dependence, if they have any, must be a presumptuous dependence on insulted kindness, or severely tried patience and long-suffering. Such persons are proper objects of deep, deep sympathy, shutting themselves out of all rational support and consolation, amid the anxieties, and perplexities, and sorrows of life. Oh ! that we could awaken even one such person to carefulness about that of which he has no care, the salvation of the soul ; to anxiety about that regarding which he is not at all anxious, the miseries of eternity. Oh ! that we could hear him, like Ephraim, bemoaning himself and saying, " What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? Who can dwell with devouring fire ? who can dwell with the everlasting burning ? How shall I come before the Lord ? How shall I stand before this holy Lord God ?

Oh ! how shall I escape, or how shall I endure the wrath to come ? What, what must I do to be saved ?” Then when he is beginning to despair we would begin to hope of him. Then would we say, with all the intensity of earnestness we could throw into our language and voice,—for however desirable such anxiety is, in comparison of stupid inconsideration or presumptuous confidence, its continuance is not a desirable thing ; the sooner it is removed, if aright removed, the sooner it is got quit of, if safely disposed of, the better,—then we would say, Poor overburdened one, cast thy care on God, the God of salvation. He cares for thee, he alone can release thee. In the belief of the truth respecting his gracious character, manifested in consistency with, in glorious illustration of, his immaculate holiness and infinite justice in the atoning death of his Son, the just One, in the room of the unjust, you may obtain, you will obtain, relief at once, from a burden of guilt, which will certainly, if unremoved, sink your soul to hell, as well as from a burden of anxiety, which, if unremoved, might lay your body in an untimely grave. And in getting relief from that anxiety, a foundation is laid for getting relief from all anxieties : and henceforward we could with unfaltering voice address to him the words of the text, in all the blissful immeasurable breadth and depth of meaning which belongs to them. “Cast all your care on God, for he cares for you.” Oh ! that it may be so with some poor thoughtless sinner, anxious about every thing but that about which, above all other things, he has cause to be anxious. Amen.

DISCOURSE XXIII.

THE CHRISTIAN'S GREAT ENEMY—HIS DUTY IN REFERENCE TO HIM, AND HIS ENCOURAGEMENT TO DISCHARGE IT.

1 PET. v. 8-11.—Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you: to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

THERE is, perhaps, no article of revealed truth which has been more generally ridiculed by infidels, and probably, for that reason, more frequently attempted to be explained away by philosophizing Christians, than the doctrine of the existence and agency of evil spirits. That among professed Christians highly absurd notions on this subject have been entertained, and to a certain extent are still entertained, I am not disposed to question; but surely revelation cannot be fairly charged with the errors and absurdities of those who profess to believe it, unless it can be satisfactorily proved that it gives sanction to these errors and absurdities.

In the present instance it will be no difficult task to show that no such sanction is afforded, and that in the doctrine of the existence and agency of evil spirits, as taught in the Holy Scriptures, there is nothing irrational or ridiculous.

For what is their doctrine on this subject? It may be thus briefly stated: 'There exists a numerous race of unembodied intelligent beings, occupying a higher place than man in the general scale of existence, who have lost the moral integrity in which they were created, and who, though under the control of the supreme providence, are constantly engaged in an attempt, by a variety of methods, and particularly by influencing in a malignant manner the minds of men, to uphold and extend the empire of evil in the universe of God.' Now, what principle of reason, what appearance in nature, what well-established fact, what declaration of Scripture, is contradicted by this doctrine? I know of none. Let us look at the subject a little more closely.

That there should be morally imperfect, that is, wicked creatures, in a world which owes its origin and continued existence to an all-perfect Being, infinite in power and wisdom, holiness and benignity; and that a being, capable of moral judgment, and possessed of free agency, should refuse the greatest good, and choose the greatest evil, are mysterious facts, for which no man can fully account, but of which surely no rational man can seriously doubt. Every man has their evidence, alas! but too abundant, around him and within him. Man certainly is a depraved intelligent being; and if it be certain that there are depraved embodied spirits, it would be difficult to prove that there cannot be depraved unembodied spirits.

The mode in which these immaterial agents influence human character, and conduct, and destiny, may safely be acknowledged to be inexplicable; but the fact that they do possess and exert such influence, is not on this ground, if supported by appropriate and adequate evidence, incredible. The mode in which one human mind influences another, though no sane person can doubt of the fact, is involved in equal mystery. It is not more wonderful, nor on sufficient evidence more difficult to be believed, in some points of view it is less so, that one spiritual being should act on another, without the intervention of bodily organs,

than that by certain conventional sounds conveyed to the ear, or certain arbitrary characters presented to the eye, the thoughts and feelings of one embodied spirit should be communicated to another embodied spirit, and become the instruments of altering opinions, exciting desires, stimulating to action.

The agency of the evil spirits on the human mind is no more inconsistent with the freedom of human action, than the influence exerted by objects presented to the mind by the senses, or by the reasonings and persuasions of our fellow men; and there can be no more difficulty to him to whom nothing is difficult, for the resources of his power and wisdom are infinite and inexhaustible, in overruling the agency of devils, than in overruling the agency of wicked men to the promotion of the great ends of his righteous and benignant government.

These remarks go no farther, and were intended to go no farther, than to show that the doctrine of the existence and agency of evil spirits is not, abstractly considered, an absurd tenet; that the attempt to put it down by ridicule is altogether unworthy of men who lay claim to the honourable appellation of philosophers, lovers of wisdom; and that there is no necessity to have recourse to metaphor and allegory to explain away those passages of Scripture which, in their obvious and literal sense, explicitly teach this doctrine.

The evidence of the existence and agency of evil spirits is to be sought for in the Holy Scriptures. It is entirely a matter of supernatural revelation; and I have no hesitation in asserting, that such evidence is to be found there in such abundance and explicitness, that an unprejudiced reader, who believes the authenticity and inspiration of the sacred volume, and interprets its declarations on the principles which he applies to written language generally, will find it as difficult to doubt of the existence and doings of such a being as Satan or the devil, and his subordinate agents, as of the existence and doings of such men as Moses and Samuel, Peter or Paul.

The passage before us is one, out of a multitude, which clearly proves the existence and wide extent of malignant spiritual agency; and, in common with the most of such passages, shows that this doctrine is, like the doctrines of revelation generally, not a mere matter of curiosity or speculation, but calculated and intended to exert a powerful and a salutary influence, in forming the character and guiding the conduct of Christians during their present disciplinary and preparatory state. The fact is distinctly asserted, that the "devil, their adversary, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." This assertion is made, that they may be induced to resist him; and, in order that they may successfully resist him, that they may be sober, and watchful, and steadfast in the faith; and they are encouraged, under the sufferings in which the attempts of their powerful, and crafty, and cruel, and active adversary may involve them, by the consideration, that such sufferings have been the common lot of the faithful in all ages, that they have been enabled to endure them, and in due season have been delivered from them. To these interesting topics, then, it is my intention to turn your minds in the remaining part of the discourse. The Christian's adversary; the Christian's duty in reference to this adversary; and the Christian's encouragement while engaged in performing this duty.

I. THE CHRISTIAN'S GREAT ENEMY.

Let us first, then, consider the statement made respecting the Christian's adversary. "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." There are two questions which here require attention. Who is this adversary? and what is here stated in reference to him?

CHAP. I.—WHO IS HE? THE DEVIL.

To the first question, who is this adversary? the answer

is, he is "the devil." The word translated devil, properly signifies destroyer of peace, calumniator, and is given to the chief of evil spirits as an appropriate designation. The same being is termed "Satan," a word of similar meaning with devil, signifying enemy or accuser ; "the wicked one," to mark his depravity generally, and especially his malignity ; "Belial," a term signifying low, abject, describing both his character and situation ; "the tempter ;" "the god and the prince of this world ;" "the chief of the demons ;" "Baalzebub," the lord of the flies, "the prince of the power of the air ;" "Apollyon," the destroyer ; "he that hath the power of death ;" "the great dragon ;" and "the old serpent."¹

With regard to this very remarkable being, our information, all of course derived from revelation, though very limited, is abundantly distinct. He is a being of the angelic order, formed, as all intelligent beings were, and must have been, in a state of moral integrity, who, at a period anterior to the fall of man, in consequence of a violation of the Divine law, of the peculiar nature of which we are not informed, was, along with a large number of other spirits, who, it would appear, in consequence of being seduced by him, were partakers of his guilt, cast out of heaven, his "original abode," placed in a state of degradation and punishment, and reserved to deeper shame and fiercer pains "at the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Through his malignity and falsehood, man, who was innocent, became guilty ; man, who was holy, became depraved ; man, who was happy, became miserable ; man, who was immortal, became liable to death.

Over the minds of the human race, while they continue irregenerate, he exercises a very powerful, though not physically irresistible influence, "working in the children of disobedience, and leading them captive at his will ;" and even over their bodies, he has in many instances exer-

¹ 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Job. i. 6. Eph. vi. 16. 2 Cor. vi. 15. Matt. iv. 5. 1 Thess. ii. 5. 2 Cor. iv. 4. John xii. 31. Matt. xii. 24. Eph. ii. 2. Rev. ix. 11. Heb. ii. 14. Rev. xii. 3, 9.

cised a malignant power. He exerts himself, by his numerous agents, infernal and human, in counteracting the Divine, benignant plan, for the salvation of men. Error, sin, and misery, in all their forms, are ultimately his work; his animating principle is hatred of God, and his leading object the maintenance and extension of the power of evil.

During that period of holy light and happiness, the millennium, to which the church and the world have so long looked forward with eager desire, his power and opportunities to do evil will be greatly diminished, if not entirely taken away. In the period immediately preceding the general judgment, he will again manifest his unchanged hostility to the benignant designs of God respecting man; and when the mystery of God is finished, shall, along with those angels and men who have chosen him for their leader in preference to God, be cut off for ever from all intercourse with the unfallen and restored part of the intelligent creation, and "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power."

CHAP. II.—WHAT IS HE?

§ 1. *He is an adversary—their adversary.*

Let us now inquire, in the second place, what is said of this extraordinary being in the passage before us. He is the Christian's adversary; "your adversary the devil." He is "the adversary;" the friend of none, the enemy of all. Enmity, malignity, is the very element of his moral being. He hates God, and men, and holy angels; and the only tie apparently existing between him and his subordinate agents, is a common enmity against God, and all that is God's. He is the adversary of all men. He has deeply injured the race; and he does not pity, but hate those whom he has injured. Murderer, manslayer, is his name from the beginning.¹

¹ John viii. 44. *Ανθρῳποκτονος.*

But he is peculiarly the adversary of that portion of mankind, who have been led by the good Spirit to revolt from his usurped dominion, to place themselves under the guidance of the Captain of the Lord's host, and to become fellow-workers under him in the accomplishment of his great enterprise, which is "to destroy the works of the devil." Both as individuals and as a body, true Christians are the objects of the peculiar enmity of the evil one. This is the truth which is taught us in the Apocalypse, when we are told, that "the dragon persecuted the woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars; being wroth with her, and making war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." "They were," as Archbishop Leighton says, "once under his power; and now, being escaped from him, he pursues them, as Pharaoh with all his forces, as a prey that was once in his den, and under his paw; and now that it is rescued, he rages and roars after it." His object is the destruction of the Christian cause; the cause of truth and holiness, of God's glory and man's happiness; and therefore he cannot but be the adversary of those who seek to promote that cause. He exerts himself, by craft or violence, to induce them to abandon that cause, by doing which their sharing his destruction would be secured; or, if he cannot succeed in this object, he endeavours to make as miserable as he can in this world, those whom he knows he will have no opportunity of tormenting in the next.

Of the manner in which their adversary manifests his enmity to them, we have a very picturesque account in these words, "As a roaring lion he walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." Under the influence of inflamed malignity, which will not let him rest, compared to the lions' appetite for blood, sharpened by hunger, he, in the exercise of his power and craft, both of which are indicated by the figure, the lion being at once strong and wily, is constantly endeavouring to do them mischief. It is highly

probable that the Apostle had immediately in his eye the attempts which the wicked one was then making, by means of his agents, both infernal and human, to produce those fearful persecutions on the part of the Roman pagan empire, by which the faith and patience of the saints were so severely tried, by which multitudes were induced to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience; turning back to perdition, becoming his prey, body and soul, for ever. And multitudes more, who were faithful to the death, and obtained a crown of life, were, "by the devil, cast into prison, and suffered tribulation;" "they had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings: they were stoned, they were slain by the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and in caves of the earth." While I have little doubt that this is the immediate reference of the words, they bring before the mind certain general truths respecting our great spiritual enemy, of which it is of great importance that Christians, in all countries and ages, should be habitually mindful. They lead us to think of him as subtle, active, cruel, and powerful.

§ 2. *He is a subtle adversary.*

This passage leads us to think of our great adversary as subtle. The lion, like all other beasts of prey, is endowed with a high degree of sagacity, to enable it to discover and surprise its prey. When David would convey to our minds an idea of the cunning of his enemies, he compares him to the lion. "He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net. He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones."¹ The figure naturally then suggests

¹ Psal. x. 8-10.

the idea of subtlety. This is one of the leading thoughts too suggested, when the devil is represented as the old serpent: for "the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made."

Subtlety is indeed one of the leading characters of our great spiritual enemy. He originally belonged to that order of beings whose wisdom is proverbial—"wise as an angel of God;" and, when he lost his moral purity, we have no reason to think he lost his intellectual energy. It took a new direction, but with unabated force. From the change of its object, it ceased indeed to deserve the name of wisdom. The appropriate appellation henceforward was craft or subtlety. We have a melancholy proof of his cunning, in the method he followed in his successful attempt to deceive the mother of mankind. With what consummate address does he whet her curiosity, quiet her fears, and flatter her vanity, till he has accomplished his great purpose, the ruin of our race! Ever since he obtained that victory over our first parents, he has been engaged in tempting their children; and the experience of nearly six thousand years, added to his natural cunning, must have rendered him expert indeed in the art of deceiving, that he may destroy. Accordingly, we find the Apostle terming those suggestions, by which he endeavours to lead men astray from God, "the wiles, the devices of the devil."¹

He has no power indeed of obtaining directly a knowledge of the human heart. That is the peculiar prerogative of Him who made it. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins."² But he carefully observes our conduct, and shrewdly draws conclusions respecting our prevailing dispositions. His temptations are regulated by the information he thus obtains. He suits the snare to the habits of the bird he means to entrap. He draws the voluptuary into the way of iniquity by the lure of pleasure, the avaricious by the promise of gain, the ambitious by the prospect of glory.

¹ Eph. vi. 11.

² Jer. xvii. 10.

He goes round about his victims, that he may espy where is the quarter in which they are weakest, or least afraid of attack, that he may assault them there. He takes advantage of every thing in their temper, age, and condition, to give effect to his suggestions.

He keeps himself as much as possible out of view, and manages his approaches so as, that when danger is at length apprehended, there is scarce a possibility of escape. He even occasionally transforms himself into an angel of light, and employs as his instruments, often while they themselves are unaware of it, the very persons from whom we would have been the last to suspect any hazard.

Sometimes he gets possession of the citadel of the heart as it were by storm, without allowing opportunity or time for repelling the assault. At other times he proceeds by sap and mine; and, without alarm to the conscience, effects his nefarious purpose. But it were endless to enumerate all the subtle devices by which Satan endeavours to disturb the peace and retard the progress of the saint; to prevent the repentance, and to secure the destruction, of the sinner. Enough has been said to show, that the figure chosen by the sacred writer is in this respect a significant one; and that the lion, in his arts for securing his prey, is a truly, but an imperfectly, descriptive emblem of "him who beguiled Eve through his subtlety," and has deluded, and is deluding, so many millions of her sons into those ways of error and sin which lead down to the chambers of eternal death.

§ 3. *He is an active adversary.*

But our great spiritual enemy is not only subtle, he is also active. The lion ranges far and near in quest of his prey. The lion of hell is here represented as walking about, seeking whom he may devour. "Whence comest thou?" said Jehovah to Satan, when he, as the accuser of the brethren, appeared in the midst of the sons of God. "Whence comest thou?" The answer was, "From going to and fro through

when he is come, he finds this empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first."¹ We know an instance of his returning only to renew his attack with redoubled violence on those over whom he has no power, in the case of our Lord. We read, after the temptation of forty days in the wilderness, that "the devil departed from him;" but it was only in that form, and but "for a season."² He was still going about him, seeking an occasion to make an attack on him; and we find him in the hour of exhaustion and sorrow springing on his victim, and by his infernal assault drawing forth from the lips of him who was embodied patience and fortitude those awful words, as if all he had experienced of diabolical attacks hitherto was unworthy of notice, "Now is the hour and power of darkness."

§ 4. *He is a cruel adversary.*

Cruelty is another feature in the character of our great spiritual enemy, which the statement in the text brings before the mind. The lion is a stranger to pity. Like most ravenous beasts, he seems to have satisfaction in inflicting pain. The bleating of the lamb whom he is about to devour occasions in him no relentings, and he regards not the agonies he occasions to the bleeding, mangled sufferer. Equally ruthless is the great murderer from the beginning, the great destroyer of human souls. He appears to have a savage satisfaction in producing misery. The lion, when he tears to pieces the quivering limbs of the slaughtered kid, has an enjoyment altogether separate from the gratification of the desire to destroy. He satisfies the painful cravings of hunger, and obtains a nourishment for his body. But the destroyer of human innocence and peace, the devourer of souls, derives no advantage, can derive no advantage, knows

¹ Matt. xii. 43.

² Luke iv. 13.

that he can derive no advantage, from the miseries which he inflicts, the ruin which he occasions. On the contrary, every malignant act deepens his guilt, and will aggravate his future condemnation ; and he cannot but be aware of this. Yet so deeply is the desire of diffusing misery rooted in his nature, that though conscious that in yielding to it, he is but rendering his miserable condition more miserable, treasuring up to himself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, he still, day and night, restlessly seeks for opportunities of making the good bad, and the bad worse, the happy miserable, and the miserable more miserable.

§ 5. *He is a powerful adversary.*

The only other idea suggested by the figurative description of our great spiritual enemy is, that he is a being of formidable power. Solomon informs us that the “lion is the strongest among beasts,”¹ and, I believe modern naturalists hold that there is no animal of the same size which possesses so much muscular power. The devil belongs to an order, the angelic, which excels in strength ; and though we know his powers are restrained by the Divine providence, we have no reason to think that his moral depravation produced any diminution of his physical energy. The tempest which overwhelmed the family of Job in the ruins of the house of their elder brother, and the fearful effects produced both on the bodies and the minds of those individuals who were the subjects of demoniac possession, prove both what he can do, and would do, if not restrained by a superior power. To what extent he can and does employ physical agents, what are commonly termed the powers of nature, in executing his malignant designs, we cannot tell. This we know, that the Scripture representations naturally lead us to think of Satan as not weak, but powerful. He is emblemized in the parable by “the strong man ;” and the Apostle obviously

¹ Prov. xxx. 30.

estimates those unseen opponents, of whom the devil is the leader, as far more formidable foes than the most powerful human enemies.

We need, according to him, *divine* strength and heavenly armour to resist such enemies. "Be strong," says he, "in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil: for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."¹ So much for illustration of the Apostle's statement respecting the Christian's great spiritual enemy, so subtle, so active, so cruel, so powerful.

That part of our subject which we have attempted to illustrate, is replete with important practical instruction.

What a striking view does the contrast of the original and the present character and employment of the devil, give us of the malignant nature and tremendous power of moral evil! He who is now the worst and the most miserable of created beings, was once one of the best and the happiest. He who now prowls about the universe, "a fugitive and a vagabond," restless and miserable every where, had his first abode in the region of perfect purity, near to the throne of the Eternal; and, instead of as now going about seeking how he can waste and destroy the best part of God's works, his constant employment and delight was to celebrate the praise and do the commandments of Jehovah, hearkening to the voice of his word. And what has effected the fearful change? What has converted the angel into the devil? It was sin; that only evil in God's universe in which there is no good; that evil, the depths of whose malignity no created mind can sound. Man in his fallen state, compared with man in his primæval state, earth in its present state compared with paradise, strikingly show that it is an evil and a bitter thing to depart from God; but

¹ Matt. xii. 29. Eph. vi. 11-13.

still more striking is the illustration we have of this most important truth, when we contrast the accursed fiend with the holy angel, and the bottomless pit and the fiery lake with the palace of the great king, of the Lord of Hosts, and the rivers of pleasure that are at his right hand for evermore.

How disgraceful and miserable must be the condition of those who are the slaves of this subtle, active, cruel, powerful, depraved intelligence, in turns the instruments of his detestable designs and the victims of his insatiable cruelty ! And this is the situation of all unconverted men, whether they are aware of it or not. They are of their father the devil, and his lusts : the things he desires and delights in, they willingly abuse their powers and degrade their nature in doing. They are " taken captive of him at his will."¹ He is their successful tempter now. He will be, if mercy prevent not, their unrelenting tormentor for ever. Oh, that they were aware of the horrors of their situation, that they saw its debasement, that they felt its wretchedness, that they realized its dangers !

How grateful should we be to HIM who came to destroy the works of the wicked one, and to deliver men from his usurped dominion and baleful power ! The house of the strong man has been entered by one stronger than he. The prey has been taken from the mighty, and the captive of the terrible one delivered. The greatness of the blessing, apart from the manner in which it was procured, calls for lively gratitude ; but the claims of our deliverer are felt to be tenfold strong, when we recollect that He, the only begotten, the Holy One, of God, submitted to be tempted of the devil, to have the moral sensibilities of his holy nature shocked and tortured by his loathsome suggestions, that we might be delivered from his power, and be taught, by the example of " the Captain of our salvation," how to conduct the conflict with the enemy, as to become more than conquerors through

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 26.

him who loved us. Blessed, ever blessed, be he who came in the name of the Lord to bruise the head of the old serpent ; and who, through the merit of his atonement and the power of his Spirit, enables the most feeble and timid of his people to tread on the lion and the adder, and to trample the young lion and the dragon under foot.

Let Christians rejoice, that if a subtle, cruel, active, and powerful enemy is continually prowling about, the eye of infinite wisdom and love rests ever on them, the arm of never-tiring omnipotence is around them to protect and defend them. The lion of hell is a chained lion, a muzzled lion, to the Christian. He may alarm, but he shall never devour them. His chain is in the hand of his conqueror and their Lord. It was natural for Peter to put his brethren in mind of their great enemy. He must have often thought of the words of our Lord Jesus, " Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat ; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." ¹ His experience is full of warning and encouragement. It proves that if Christians are not cautious, though the Lion of Hell shall not be permitted to devour them, he may inflict wounds of which they will bear the marks till the close of life ; and it finely illustrates our Lord's declaration,—“ I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish ; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.” Neither their own heedlessness, nor the malignity of their infernal foe, will be able to accomplish their destruction. Let him, then, that is born of God, “ keep himself, that the wicked one touch him not ;” and let his joy, that he has a better keeper than himself, even the keeper of Israel, who never slumbers nor sleeps, not produce security, but encourage vigilance. God keeps his people, not without, but through their own watchfulness.

Finally, let all of us who have reason to hope that we have been emancipated from the powers of the wicked one, in our humble station co-operate with our great deliverer in

¹ Luke xxii. 31.

rescuing our fellow men from the degrading bondage, from the destroying power, of his and our great enemy; and while the children of the devil are so clearly proving themselves to be so, by imitating him in going about seeking whom they may destroy, let us prove our connexion with him whom we claim as our Lord and Master, by going about doing good, endeavouring to pluck the brand from the burning, to pull the prey of the lion of hell from his devouring jaws, to seek and to save what is in extreme hazard, through the craft and activity, the power and cruelty, of the wicked one, of being lost, lost for ever.

II. THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY IN REFERENCE TO HIS GREAT ENEMY.

Let us now consider the Apostle's account of the Christian's duty in reference to his great spiritual adversary. His duty is to resist him; and in order effectually to resist him, to be sober, to be watchful, to be steadfast in the faith.

CHAP. I.—WHAT HE MUST DO TO HIS GREAT ENEMY—RESIST HIM.

The attacks of our great spiritual enemy naturally divide themselves into two classes; those which are made on the Christian as an individual, and those which are made on the Christian cause. It is the duty of the Christian to resist both.

§ 1.—*He must resist his attacks on himself.*

Temptation to sin is the manner in which the evil one attacks the individual Christian. Sometimes these temptations are direct; oftener they are indirect; but all temptation to sin, like all sin itself, may be considered as directly or indirectly the work of the devil. It is much more a matter of curiosity than of use, to seek to distinguish accurately the temptations which come immediately from the wicked one, from those in presenting which to the mind he employs

intermediate agencies. But it is of great importance to remember, that all solicitations to sin, from whatever quarter they come, are in accordance with his will, and, if not resisted, will contribute to the gaining his object in warring against the soul. Of all suggestions of this kind, we may say both that they come not, they cannot come from above; they do, they must, come from beneath. Of some of them we may say they are earthly, of others they are sensual, of all they are devilish.

Generally speaking, it is the duty of the Christian carefully to keep out of the way of temptation, to avoid every thing which can be avoided in consistency with duty, which may afford an opportunity to the great enemy or his agents to assail him with solicitations to sin. It is madness to hold parley with him, or uncalled on to provoke him to combat. Such unnecessary tamperings, such self-confident conflicts, generally end in sin and shame.

But the adversary will not let the Christian alone, and the path of duty is a path that sometimes, indeed oftentimes, leads into temptation. When the Christian is attacked, he must not flee, he must not yield himself up into the hands of his enemy; he must resist, he must oppose him. He must not comply with his solicitations. Like that good spiritual soldier of ancient times he must say, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" or, like the Captain of Salvation, he must, with the shield of faith, quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, repelling his reiterated suggestions by, "It is written, it is written," and in holy indignation bidding him "get behind him."¹ He must not allow himself to deliberate on a proposal which involves in it the denial of truth, the neglect of duty, or the commission of sin, by whatever plausibilities and apparent advantages it may be recommended, but immediately, and with abhorrence, reject it.

Non-compliance with the suggestions of the wicked one,

¹ Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10.

is, however, but a part of the Christian duty of resistance. The Christian must oppose the wicked one. He must not merely stand on the defensive ; he must attack the enemy, he must quit himself like a man, and so fight as to turn to flight the alien and his armies. He must so resist the devil as that he shall flee from him. In plain words, he must make solicitations to sin occasions and means of progress in holiness. For example, when tempted to fretfulness under affliction, instead of yielding to the temptation, he must "glorify God in the fires," by more than ever possessing his soul in patience, and counting it all joy to be brought into manifold tribulation. When tempted to be ashamed of Christ or his cause, he must seize that opportunity of making his conduct proclaim more loudly than ever, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." When tempted to penuriousness in supporting the cause of Christ, he must give more cheerfully, and, if possible, more plenteously than ever. When tempted to be weary in well doing, he must feel this as a powerful reason why he should be "steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." When tempted to associate with the worldly and ungodly, he should take an opportunity of showing that in the saints on the earth, the excellent ones, is all his delight. When tempted to draw very near the borders of criminal indulgence, let him not even stand still where he is, but retire still farther from the appearance of evil, and carefully keep off of "the debateable land." When the evil one tempts to unfrequency or carelessness in secret prayer, let it be felt as a reason why we should seek to realize more and more in his own experience, what it is to "pray in the spirit, to pray always, with all prayer and supplication, and to watch thereunto with thanksgiving." Let temptations to carelessness produce increased vigilance, and to indolence increased diligence. Let attempts to make us neglect the assembling of ourselves together, lead to more conscientious attendance on public religious services, and more undivided attention in them. In one word, let all his endeavours to

lead us in the way of sin, end in our farther advancement in the opposite way of holiness. This is the way to turn the artillery of the wicked one against himself. Nothing is so well fitted to mortify that old adversary, as to find that the very means he employs to produce our apostasy and ruin are converted into the occasion of our establishment in the faith, our advancement in holiness, and our fitness for heaven. So much for the resistance which the Christian is to make to the attacks of his great spiritual enemy, directed immediately against himself as an individual.

§ 2.—*He must resist his attacks on the Christian cause.*

But the Christian is not only to resist these attacks, he is to resist the attacks which his adversary the devil is constantly making on the cause of Christ. He is constantly engaged in endeavouring to corrupt the truth as it is in Jesus; to introduce, and maintain, and extend error, and superstition, and fanaticism, and schism, and bigotry, and disorder and impurity into the churches of Christ, and to oppose the exertions which are making to diffuse the knowledge and the influence of the truth and grace which came by Jesus Christ. The Christian is to fight against Satan, not only in his own heart, but in the church and the world. There is a battle field without as well as within. He is carefully to avoid every thing which may in any way prove, however unintentionally, co-operation with the lawless one in his nefarious designs; and by all proper methods he must endeavour to counteract him.

He must, however, take care not to attempt what has been too frequently done, to vanquish the wicked one by weapons borrowed from his own armoury. He must not repel force by force, false argument by false argument, railing by railing. In such conflict the devil is sure to overcome; indeed, the very employment of these weapons is a proof that he has already, to a certain degree, overcome. In this warfare, Christians must remember that "the weapons of their warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling

down strongholds, and bringing into captivity every high thought that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God." Their motto must be, "Not by might and power, but by God's Spirit. By pureness, by knowledge, by long-suffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and the left." This is the manner in which the Apostle teaches us to carry on our warfare for the cause of Christ against the cause of the devil. "The servant of God must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves, if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, and that they may deliver themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive of him at his will."¹

Christians are not to stand looking idly on when the wicked one, by ignorance and error, and superstition and profligacy, is consummating the eternal perdition of men by millions. No, they are to "rise up for God against the evil-doer, they are to stand up for Him against" his armies, "the workers of iniquity." As "the armies of heaven, clothed in fine linen white and clean,"² they are to follow on their white horses him whose name is the Word of God, faithful and true, who, clothed in a vesture dipt in blood, rides forth prosperously on his white horse, "in righteousness, judging and making war, conquering and to conquer." Like Him, wherever they are, according to the facilities afforded by their circumstances, they are to be constantly engaged in destroying the works of the devil. Thus, then, are Christians to resist their adversary the devil.³

¹ 2 Cor. x. 4. Zech. iv. 6. 2 Cor. vi. 6-8.

² Rev. xix. 11-14.

³ The motives to resistance are strongly put by Tertullian: "Stat conflictus conspector, et victoriæ Agonothetes, Deus vivus: Xystarches, Spiritus Sanctus: Epistates, Christus Jesus; Corona, æternitatis brabium, angelicæ in cœlis substantiæ politia, gloria in secula seculorum."—Lib. ad marty. iii.

CHAP. II.—WHAT THE CHRISTIAN IS TO DO, THAT HE
MAY RESIST HIS GREAT ENEMY.

The Apostle not only enjoins this duty of resistance, he also instructs Christians how they are to be enabled to perform it. If they would successfully resist the devil, either in their own hearts or in the church and the world, they must “be sober, vigilant, and steadfast in the faith.” Let us shortly explain these exercises, and show how necessary they are, and how well fitted they are, to enable the Christian to resist his adversary the devil.

When we read these words we feel that those are injunctions that have already been given, the first of them more than once. The reiteration of such precepts in so short an Epistle, teaches a lesson both to ministers and people, both to the teachers and the taught. It says to the first, “for you to say the same things should not be grievous,” for to the second “it is safe;” ay, it is necessary. “Precept must be on precept, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.” “It were easy,” says Archbishop Leighton, “to entertain men’s mind with new discourse, if our task were rather to please than to profit: for there be many things which, with little labour, might be brought forth as new and strange to ordinary hearers. But there be a few things which it chiefly concerns us to know and practise, and these are to be more frequently represented and pressed. This Apostle, and other divine writers, drew from too full a spring to be ebb of matter; but they rather choose profitable directions than unprofitable variety, and so should we.” Yet we will find that, though substantially the same exhortations are repeated, it is always with a peculiar adaptation to the connexion in which they occur. They are not mere repetitions; they are examples of the application of general principles or precepts to particular cases. It is obviously so in the case before us.

§ 1. *He must be sober.*

The word here translated "be sober," is the same which, in the seventh verse of the preceding chapter, is rendered be vigilant. Its proper signification is to be abstinent from, or temperate in the use of, wine or other intoxicating drinks. It designates a state directly the reverse of a state of intoxication. The word may either be understood literally or figuratively. If understood literally, we are here taught that temperance, in reference to intoxicating drinks, is necessary in order to our resisting the devil. And, certainly, nothing can be more obviously true than this. The natural tendency of intoxicating drinks is to diminish the power of conscience and reason, and to increase the power of the lower principles of our nature, animal appetite and irascible feeling. It increases the strength of what needs to be restrained, and weakens the strength of what is fitted and intended to restrain. It delivers the man, in one point of view, bound hand and foot, so far as resistance is concerned, into the devil's hands; and, in another, presents him a willing soldier, appropriately armed for his service. An intoxicated man would be ill fitted to take care of himself, if exposed to the attacks of subtle, powerful beasts of prey; and he is certainly not better fitted to guard himself against that crafty and active, strong and cruel spiritual enemy, who is here represented as prowling about like a roaring lion. While this is undoubtedly true, and highly important, as the corresponding term be vigilant, that is, wakeful, is plainly to be understood in a figurative sense, we apprehend the expression before us, must also be interpreted figuratively; an interpretation which substantially includes the literal meaning, while it includes much more.

"Things seen and temporal," the pleasures, the riches, the honours of this world, are apt to intoxicate the mind. Men under their supreme influence are regulated more by imagination and appetite than by conscience and reason. What is present and sensible, occupies the whole mind.

What is unseen and future, is overlooked and forgotten, and treated as if it had no existence. Time is every thing, eternity is nothing. This is mental intoxication; and sobriety, in opposition to this, is just the sound estimate which an enlightened conscience and reason forms of the comparative value of things seen and unseen, things temporal and eternal, and a habitual state of feeling and action corresponding with this estimate.

He is sober who reckons that the ever-enduring holy happiness which can be found only in possessing the favour, and being conformed to the image of God, is of more true value to man than all else which the created universe contains; that the certainty of attaining the greatest earthly good is too dearly purchased by the slightest hazard of losing this happiness; that no sacrifice, no suffering, is to be much counted on if necessary in order to its attainment; and that what has no tendency to secure this, cannot be a matter of very much importance to a being like man. Such a man shows a mind free from intoxication. He judges of things as they really are. His maxims are obviously the words of truth and soberness. God is more excellent than the creature. The soul is more valuable than the body. Heaven is better than earth, far better than hell. Time is shorter than eternity.

The man who is thus sober is prepared for resisting the devil, in both the ways illustrated above. The devil is the god of this world, and all his power is derived from it. The sum of what he has to say in the way of temptation is, 'All earthly good is delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. All earthly evil is in my power, and on whomsoever I will I inflict it.' It is by the hope of worldly good, or the fear of worldly evil, that he prevails on men to neglect duty, and to commit sin. But the truly sober man has his spiritual senses too well exercised to believe either the implied or the express falsehood. He knows that God has not relinquished the government of the world, or so committed it into the hands of his great enemy, as that he has the disposal either of the good or the evil of life; and though he had, he

knows that there is a more valuable good which compliance with his suggestions would forfeit; a more dreadful evil to which compliance with these suggestions would expose him. So far as influenced by this sober judgment he “keeps himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not.” And the same sober judgments of the value of the soul, and of the importance of eternity, naturally lead to strenuous persevering exertions to resist the devil, in his attempts to introduce error and superstition into the church, and to perpetuate ignorance, idolatry, and wickedness in the world.

§ 2. *He must be vigilant.*

But that Christians may effectually resist their adversary the devil, the Apostle calls on them to be not only sober, but “vigilant.” The literal meaning of the word is to keep awake, in opposition to falling asleep, as shepherds do when watching their sheep by night, or sentinels when keeping watch on the walls of a city; it indicates a state of watchfulness, in opposition to a state of sleep or sleepiness. Some would interpret the words literally; and it is on this ground, among others, that Roman Catholics prescribe watching as well as fasting as a means of spiritual advantage, and of successfully resisting our ghostly adversaries.

There can be no reasonable doubt, however, that here, and wherever else in the New Testament, watching is prescribed as a general Christian duty, the word is used figuratively. A state of security, inattention, and inactivity, is naturally emblemized by a state of sleep; and a state of consciousness of existing hazards, attention to them, and active employment of the means to escape them, by a state of watching or wakefulness.

To be watchful, with a reference to the resistance of the evil one, implies that the individual is aware of the existence and reality of the hazards to which, from malignant spiritual influence, his highest interests are exposed; that he is on the alert to notice all the movements of the subtle, active, cruel, and powerful foe; and that not ignorant of, or

inattentive to, his devices, he looks around him, walks circumspectly, aware that in any quarter the enemy may make his appearance; and that he so disguises himself, and varies his form, that it requires spiritual sagacity, in its most awakened state, to detect him; and, finally, that when he does discover him ready to deceive or to devour, to delude or destroy, he is ready, broad awake, in full possession of his spiritual faculties, prepared to employ the proper means for counter-working him, and disappointing his nefarious purposes.

It is not enough that a man be sober, that is, not intoxicated, round whom a powerful crafty beast of prey is prowling. He must be wakeful. However sober, if he fall asleep, he is in imminent hazard of being dangerously wounded, if not devoured. Indeed, he is not acting like a sober man, if, in these circumstances, he allows himself to fall asleep. In like manner, the Christian must not only have a just estimate of the comparative importance of things unseen and eternal, but his spiritual senses must be habitually exercised; the eyes of his mind "must look right on, and his eyelids look straight before him." He must "ponder the path of his feet," and especially "keep his heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."¹ He must, like a watchful sentinel, take good heed, that through none of the external senses, the gates, as Bunyan represents them, of the good town Mansoul, the great adversary, under any disguise, finds his way to the citadel of the heart. He must be watchful, for his enemy is so.

The influence which this vigilance is calculated to exert on the resistance of the wicked one in his attack both on us as individuals, and on the cause of Christ, is so obvious, that I may safely leave you to follow out this train of thought in your private meditations.

§ 3. *He must be steadfast in the faith.*

The third and principal means by which Christians are to

¹ Prov. iv. 23, 25, 26.

be enabled to resist the great adversary, is the being "steadfast in the faith." We call that the principal means ; for it is as necessary to the right use of the other means as to the gaining the common end : as necessary to the being "sober and vigilant" as to "the resisting of the devil."

The Apostle takes for granted that the persons whom he addressed were "believers." They were "in the faith ;" and he calls on them to be "steadfast in the faith." Had he been speaking to unconverted men, the first thing he would have called on them to do, would have been to believe ; for, till they believed, they could neither see their danger, nor use the means which was necessary for their safety. They to whom he writes believed the truth respecting their natural condition as the willing helpless slaves of the wicked one, bound in the fetters of guilt and the cords of depravity. They had believed the truth respecting Jesus the great deliverer, who, by the blood of his covenant, had made provision for the deliverance of the prisoners out of the pit in which there was no water ; who proclaims liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them who are bound ; who takes the prey from the mighty, and delivers the captive of the terrible one. They had believed that those who refuse to be released by him, must, along with their enslaver, be shut up under everlasting chains in the prison of hell, and that they who accept of the freely offered deliverance shall, under the protection and guidance of their redeeming Lord, be preserved, amid all the attempts of their former oppressors to bring them again into slavery, and ultimately placed by him in circumstances of perfect, holy happiness, while Satan shall be for ever bruised under their feet.

It is the belief of these things that has sobered their minds, and roused them to spiritual vigilance. This has wakened them, and it is this only that can keep them awake ; and for this purpose they must be "steadfast in the faith." They must hold fast the truth as it is in Jesus.

It is not enough that they have believed ; they must continue believing. The truth and its evidence must be habitually before their minds. Every thing depends on that. They are safe "if they keep in memory what has been preached to them ;" not otherwise. The truth works effectually towards the resistance of the wicked one, but only in him who believes it, and only in the degree in which he believes it. It is faith that makes the Christian strong for combat. Let him lose sight of the truth and its evidence, and, like Samson shorn of his locks, he is weak as another man. Whenever he staggers through unbelief, he becomes powerless in resisting the great adversary. It is He only who puts on the whole armour of God that can stand in the evil day ; but it is the believer alone who can put on and wear and wield that armour. It is the girdle of truth believed that can alone gird up the loins of the mind. The breastplate, is the righteousness which is of God by faith. The well-roughed shoes, of the preparation of the gospel of peace, which are necessary to enable the spiritual soldier to stand firm in the slippery field of temptation, can be worn only by them who believe that gospel. The shield, which enables him to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one, is the shield of faith. The hope, which is the helmet of salvation, can grace no brow but the brow of the believer, for hope rests on faith ; the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, can be wielded only by the arm of the believer ; and the prayer which is necessary to secure the right and the effectual use of all those pieces of spiritual armour, is the prayer of faith.

Had our first parents been steadfast in faith, they had never fallen. They became the prey of unbelief in the shape of doubt, before they became the victims of the devil. God said, Ye shall surely die ; they doubted him. The devil said, Ye shall not surely die ; they believed him : and then were befooled and enslaved by him. It was by being steadfast in faith that the great Captain of our salvation successfully resisted the wicked one, and blunted all his fiery

darts. To them all he presented the shield of faith in a specific Divine declaration, and the most envenomed of them fell harmless at his feet. By faith all the elders who have received a good report turned to flight the alien armies of their infernal as well as mortal enemies ; and still is it true, and it will continue true, till the last spiritual conflict has taken place on earth, “ This is the victory that overcometh the world,” and the God of the world “ even our faith.”¹ Here, as in the former case, I leave it to yourselves to follow out more fully, the manner in which steadfast faith operates in enabling the Christian to resist the adversary in his attacks on himself individually, and on the great cause of his Lord and King.

III. THE CHRISTIAN'S ENCOURAGEMENT TO PERFORM HIS DUTY IN REFERENCE TO HIS GREAT ENEMY.

It only remains that we briefly attend to the encouragement which the Christian has amid the sufferings in which his struggles with his spiritual enemies may involve him. That encouragement is derived from two sources—an undoubted fact and a faithful promise ; an undoubted fact—the same struggle has been sustained and surmounted by all the brotherhood ; and a faithful promise—“ the God of all grace, who hath called them unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after they have suffered a while, will make them perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle them.” Let us attend to these encouragements in their order.

CHAP. I.—THE ENCOURAGING FACT—ALL THE BROTHERHOOD HAVE SUSTAINED AND SURMOUNTED THIS STRUGGLE.

And first, let us consider the encouraging fact. “ Knowing this,” says the Apostle, “ that the same afflictions are accom-

¹ 1 John v. 4.

plished in your brethren who are in the world." It has been questioned whether the sufferings here spoken of refer to the inward sufferings occasioned by the temptations of the wicked one, or to the outward sufferings, the persecutions which spring out of the influence of the wicked one on the minds of his slaves and their enemies. I do not think that it is necessary, or even proper, to confine it to either. It refers to sufferings growing out of the machinations and agency of their great spiritual adversary of whatever kind. The Apostle states that "the same afflictions"—afflictions of the same kind arising from the same cause—"were accomplished in their brethren," literally, 'in their brotherhood,' "in the world."

Some have thought that these words contain in them but little to support under suffering, and have applied the words of a heathen moralist: "It is but poor consolation that I am one of many sufferers." But if we look at the words carefully, we will find that they are replete with encouragement.

Sufferers are very apt to think their case quite singular; others have been tried, but none tried as they are; and the Apostle Paul shows his knowledge of human nature when he says to the Corinthians, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man." Your sufferings are not peculiar. It is unreasonable to complain of what is so common a lot. It were pusillanimous to sink under what so many are suffering and have sustained.

But the consolation here given is of a higher kind than this. These sufferings are characteristic of the brotherhood to which you belong. Every member of that brotherhood is a partaker of them. He who is the first-born of the many brethren, experienced the temptations of the devil and the persecutions of wicked men; and in their sufferings all the younger branches of the Holy Family have fellowship with Him. You could not belong to that brotherhood if you were entire strangers to their afflictions.¹ "If ye were of the world

¹ "Erras si putas, unquam Christianum persecutionem non pati."—HIERONYMUS.

the world would love its own," and the God of this world would not so harass you; "but because ye are not of the world, but chosen out of the world," therefore the world and its prince harass and abuse you. It is one of the family badges; "if ye were without such chastisements," of which all the children, all the brotherhood, are partakers, "then were ye bastards, and not sons."¹ Would you willingly part with the characteristic privileges of the brotherhood, in order to obtain exemption from their characteristic sufferings? Besides, as these sufferings are common to the brotherhood, you may be assured of that cordial sympathy which lightens suffering, and that "fervent prayer which avails much."

Then there is some peculiarity in the phrase "are accomplished," are fulfilled. It is not said they are endured by, but they are accomplished or fulfilled in. This peculiar mode of expression leads us to think of these sufferings as appointments which must be fulfilled. No chance has happened to you. "This hath come forth from him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Satan and his agents are but doing to you, as they did to your Lord, "what God's hand and counsel before time determined to be done." These temptations and persecutions are a part of the manifold trials to which, for a season, it is needful that you be subject; for "they who would live godly in this world must suffer persecution." Your Lord has assured you, that "in the world ye shall have tribulation;" and his Apostle, that "through much tribulation ye must enter the kingdom." These are sufferings to which ye are appointed and called. These are sufferings appointed to every Christian as members of the body of Christ, and they must be accomplished. They are a part of the discipline by which the brotherhood on earth are to be made fit for joining the brotherhood in heaven.

And, then, what encouragement and consolation is there in the thought, that these afflictions, as they must for wise and benignant reasons be endured by the whole bro-

¹ Heb. xii. 8.

therhood while they are in the world, they are to be *accomplished* here? The brotherhood, who are with their Father and their elder brother in heaven, are completely beyond the reach of temptation and persecution. Satan is bruised under their feet. They are made more than conquerors. The helmet has been exchanged for the crown that fadeth not away; the sword of conflict for the palm of victory; and the cry, "I am oppressed, undertake for me," for the shout, "Salvation to our God and the Lamb for ever and ever. To him that loved us and washed us in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God his Father, to him be dominion and glory for ever and ever."

And where they are, their brethren on the earth will ere-long be. Is it not meet that we should endure with patience and fortitude on earth, since such rest and enjoyment are prepared for us in heaven? The phrase, brotherhood on earth, naturally leads the mind to the brotherhood in heaven; that it is to be the permanent abode of the *whole* brotherhood. "The gathering together" at the coming of the Lord, is to be there. "Faithful is he who hath promised, who also will do it." "In my Father's house are many mansions," accommodation for all the brotherhood; "if it had not been so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go away, I will come again, and take you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." He became perfect through the accomplishment of his sufferings; and so, in a sense suited to our case, must we become perfect through the accomplishment of our sufferings. At the very utmost, we are not to be long in the world where our afflictions are to be accomplished, finished; we are to be for ever in the better world, where the glorious results which infinite wisdom and kindness have wrought out of these afflictions, will continue unfolding themselves to our growing astonishment and delight for ever.

Thus are all these afflictions accomplished *here*. The brotherhood who have passed the Jordan of death, and entered into the heavenly Canaan, are for ever secure from the attacks

of the wild beasts that roam the desert through which we are passing, and from all the afflictions which flow from these attacks. The old serpent shall never find his way into the restored paradise; and thither all the brotherhood are tending. Yet a little while and they shall all be there, safe and happy together, in their Father's house for ever. This is surely great encouragement, abundant consolation.

CHAP. II.—THE FAITHFUL PROMISE.

Let us now turn our attention to the still more explicit encouragement suggested by the faithful promise contained in the tenth verse; for on careful inspection it will be found to be a promise. The tenth verse is very generally considered as a prayer on the part of the Apostle, that Christians might, amid their struggles and sufferings, be “made perfect, stablished, strengthened, settled.” There can be no doubt that was his wish and prayer for them; but a closer consideration of the words convinces me, that this verse is not a prayer but a promise—not a request that God would confer certain most valuable and appropriate blessings on tempted, struggling, afflicted Christians, but a declaration that he will bestow them.

I think most careful readers of the Bible must have felt disappointed, that after so very graphic a view had been given of the dangers and struggles of the Christian, all that should have been said for his encouragement and comfort is, “the same afflictions are fulfilled in your brethren that are in the world.” The rendering given by our translators of the tenth verse, is not literal—indeed, from the text from which they translated, no strictly literal intelligible version could have been given. By the slightest of all changes, the putting one vowel in the place of another,¹ a change which the inquiries of critics have found not only to be authorized but required, the original passage is freed from

¹ ε instead of α.

all difficulty, and the encouragement administered to the tempted, struggling, afflicted believer, is as abundant and complete as we could expect or desire; indeed, "above all that we could ask or think." Literally rendered, the words are, "but the God of all grace, who hath called *us*, or you, unto his eternal glory¹ by or in Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, shall make you perfect, strengthen, stablish, settle you." It is as if he had said, such afflictions rising out of the attacks of the wicked one, must be endured by you; for they are the result of Divine appointment, an appointment reaching to and fulfilled in all your brotherhood in the world; but be not discouraged. "The God of all grace, who has called you unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered a while, shall make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." The Christian, watching against the wiles, struggling against the assaults of the lion of hell, and suffering under the effects of his attacks, and their resistance, has need of abundant support, and encouragement, and consolation, and assuredly he has got it here.

There is strong consolation *in the promise itself*. "God shall make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you," notwithstanding, nay, by means of these very afflictions. And then, what superadded encouragement and comfort is there *in the adjuncts of the promise*, in the manner in which the promise is given? For who promises? The God of all grace. The God who has called you. The God who has called you unto his eternal glory in Christ Jesus. The God who has called you to this glory after ye have suffered a while. Is there not in every one of these considerations a new and most exuberant fountain of spiritual encouragement and joy opened to the Christian warrior, from which he may draw most refreshing draughts when fatigued by his conflicts with his great adversary, "faint yet pursuing?" Well may he, like the Captain of his salvation, drink of the brook in the way, and lift up the head for renewed conflict, or untir-

¹ Εἰς Χεῖρα Ἰησοῦ.

ing pursuit. Let us first, then, look at the matter of the promise, and then at the manner in which it is given.

§ 1. *The encouragement contained in the promise itself.*

Let us look at the promise "God shall make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." The general meaning of the promise obviously is, God will, notwithstanding, and even by means of these afflictions, promote your spiritual improvement, and add to your real happiness. All the figurative expressions are well fitted, and, with the exception of one of them,¹ frequently employed in the New Testament, to denote spiritual improvement and growth in holiness and comfort; and, it has been supposed by many interpreters, that it is to no purpose to look for any specific meaning in each of these terms. They consider the promise as just a declaration, that through the preaching of God's word, the influence of his Spirit, and the overruling power of his providence, these afflictions should work together for their good, in the most extensive sense of the word, for making them really and ultimately completely holy and happy, in entire conformity to the holy, holy, holy, ever-blessed One. We are disposed to think, however, that the Apostle seldom heaps up words merely for the sake of emphasis, and that, in the passage before us, every one of the figurative expressions presents us with a distinct phase, as it were, of the blessings which God bestows on his people, under the afflictions, and by means of the afflictions which are connected with the assaults of the great adversary on them, and their resistance to these assaults.

It has been ingeniously supposed, that there is but one image in the whole passage, and that the different figurative expressions are connected representations of its different parts. Christians are supposed here, as in many places of the New Testament, to be represented as "God's building," "a holy temple,"² and the whole of their Christian improve-

¹ *Θηναῖσι* is one of the ἀπαξ λεγόμενα.

² 1 Cor. iii. 9. Eph. ii. 21, 22. 1 Pet. ii. 5.

ment is termed their edification or building up. They are "settled," or the foundation is laid; then they are "strengthened," strong beams are fixed, and massy pillars raised; then they are "stablished," the building is roofed and protected from the injuries of the weather; and, finally, they are "perfected." Every thing within and without is so fashioned, as to become a meet habitation for God through the Spirit. There is ingenuity enough here; but it is plain, if that had been the Apostle's figure, the order of the expressions would have been reversed. The four expressions seem, plainly, to bring four distinct and unconnected figurative representations before the mind. Let us endeavour to ascertain their precise meaning.

(1.) *They shall be made perfect.*

God promises, first, that he will "make" Christians struggling with their great adversary "perfect." The word translated make perfect, properly signifies to make fully ready, to put in full order, to complete. It is used of fitting nets for being employed by mending them, and of the wickedness of the wicked fitting them as vessels of destruction for being destroyed. This is plainly its meaning, when the Apostle prays the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, to make Christians "perfect in every good work to do his will;"¹ that is plainly to fit them, by supplying what was wanting in them, for doing God's will in the performance of every good work; and when the Messiah, our High Priest, who must have somewhat to offer, is introduced as saying, "a body hast thou prepared (the same word as here) me," made ready for, fitted for me; and when the worlds are said to be "framed (the same word) by the word of God," prepared, fitted, for the purpose they were meant to serve.² In the passage before us, viewed as a promise to those who were called to conflict with an

¹ Heb. xiii. 21.

² Heb. x. 5; xi. 3.

adversary, with whom in themselves they were very ill able to cope (and such general words must almost always be modified in their meaning, and limited in their reference by the context), its meaning plainly is, God will fit you for the conflict to which you are called by supplying all your defects. He will by his word and Spirit qualify you for all that you shall be called on to do and suffer in the combat. His grace shall be sufficient for you. He does not send you unarmed to the field of combat. He gives you the whole armour of God,¹ "that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." He gives you the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of the preparation of the gospel of peace, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; and he not only lays them down before you, but by his Spirit he enables you to put them on, and teaches you so to prove the various parts of this celestial panoply, as that in the day of battle you may turn them to good account in the combat with the alien and his armies. He will give you all the wisdom, all the courage, all the energy, that is necessary for successful conflict. This promise seems addressed to the Christian looking forward to the combat. The succeeding ones seem to refer to them when engaged in it.

(2.) *They shall be established.*

The second promise is, that God will "stablish" them. To stablish is to keep firm and steadfast. The Christian is afraid that he will fall before his enemies, that he will not be able to keep his ground, that he will lose courage, that he will be turned back with shame to himself, and disgrace to his Lord and his cause, that he will prove an apostate, that he will not be able to hold fast the faith and its profession, that he will find it difficult to stand, far more to withstand, that he will make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, and, instead of being crowned as a victor, shall

¹ Eph. vi. 13-18.

be put to shame as a recreant and castaway ; but God meets these not unnatural apprehensions with the promise—I will stablish thee, I will keep thee from falling. The promise in the 2d Epistle to the Thessalonians, iii. 3, seems quite parallel with this : “The Lord is faithful who shall stablish you, and preserve you from evil,” rather from the evil one.¹ It is just the evangelical version of the Old Testament oracle : “Fear thou not ; for I am with thee : be not dismayed ; I am thy God : I will help thee ; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” He will “put his law into their hearts ;” and then, notwithstanding all the attempts of their spiritual enemies, “they shall not depart from him.”²

(3.) *They shall be strengthened.*

The third promise is, God shall “strengthen” you. In the day of spiritual conflict he will enable them not only to stand, but to withstand ; not only to keep their ground, but to press forward ; not merely to defend themselves, but to attack their enemies. “Out of weakness they shall” so “wax strong,” as to “turn to flight the armies of the aliens.” He will, by the effectual operation of his Spirit, through the instrumentality of his word, render the very efforts of their enemies to subdue them, the means of calling forth into action a power of which they themselves were before unconscious, so as to compel them to say, with a new feeling, of the depth of truth contained in the words, “When I am weak, then I am strong.” Thus does “he give power to the faint, and to them who have no might he increaseth strength ;” so that, though “even the youths faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fail,” they, “waiting on the Lord, renew their strength ; they mount up on wings as eagles ; they run, and are not weary ; they walk, and are not faint,”³ Thus it is, that amid the infirmities of his people, “the power of Christ rests on them.” They are made

¹ Του πονηρου.

² Isa. xli. 10. Jer. xxxii. 40.

³ Isa. xl. 29-31.

“strong in the Lord and in the power of his might;” and they “go in the strength of the Lord God, making mention of his righteousness, even of his only.” “In the Lord, in whom they have righteousness, they also have strength.”

(4.) *They shall be settled.*

The fourth and last promise is, “God shall settle you.” The word rendered settle is equivalent to make to rest securely, as a building on its foundations. The idea is, the design of these attacks of Satan is to drive you from the foundation, Jesus and the truth as it is in Jesus; but God will render all these attempts ineffectual by his preparing you for them, stablishing you, and strengthening you under them, and, by enabling you to stand and withstand, he will make them the means of fixing you firmer on that foundation than ever. Such afflictions, instead of producing apostasy, produce perseverance. “We glory in tribulation,” that is, suffering in the cause of Christ, produced by the influence of the adversary, “knowing that tribulation worketh patience,” that is, perseverance, increased attachment to the Saviour and his cause. Satan desires to have Christians, that he may sift them, and scatter them to the winds of heaven; but through the grace of the Father, and the prayers of the Son, their faith fails not, and they are proved, to their own increased comfort and confirmed hope, by this very sifting, to be not chaff, but the Lord’s wheat, which is to be “gathered into his garner, while the chaff is burned with fire unquenchable.” These afflictions both prove the soundness of the foundation, leading the Christian more narrowly to examine it, and prove, too, that he is really built on the foundation. The Christian who is enabled to triumph over temptation, is stronger than if he had never been tempted; and there is no such firm believer as he who has battled with and fairly overcome, through him who loves him, all the doubts which the father of lies, and that most skilful sophister, the evil heart of unbelief under his influence, can suggest to the mind. This is the great object of God to settle his people on the foundation, the

rock Christ. "This," to borrow some of the beautiful thoughts of Leighton, "is the only thing that perfects and strengthens us. There is a wretched natural independency in us." We are apt to rest on something in ourselves. When we do so, we build castles in the air, imagining buildings without a foundation. A battle with our spiritual enemies will show us there is no safe footing there. If we do not seek firmer ground, we shall assuredly fall. Never will we find safety, heart peace, and progress in holiness, till we are driven from every thing in ourselves, to make him all our strength, "our rock, our fortress, our buckler, the horn of our salvation, and our high tower," to do nothing, to attempt nothing, to hope for nothing, but in him. Then shall we find his fulness and all-sufficiency, and be "more than conquerors through him who hath loved us." Few things in Christian experience are more employed by God to bring his people into this state of settledness on the rock Christ, than the afflictions rising out of the assaults of the evil one, and that resistance to these assaults, which are accomplished in the whole Christian brotherhood in the world. Thus can God bring good out of evil; strengthen faith by what was meant to overthrow it; increase the holiness and comfort of his people by what was meant to involve them in guilt, and depravity, and misery; make the wrath of devils, as well as men, to praise him, while he restrains the remainder thereof. "He will deliver them out of the mouth of the lion;" ay, "he will deliver them from every evil work," every mischievous device, every malignant attempt of their adversary or his agents, earthly or infernal, "and preserve them unto his heavenly kingdom."

Such appears to be the import of the promise; such seems to be the perfecting, stablishing, strengthening, settling, of which the Apostle speaks. To use the words of the pious and learned Bengel, "He shall perfect (that no defect may remain in you), he shall stablish (that ye may be guilty of no backsliding), he shall strengthen (that ye may overcome every adverse power), and thus he shall settle you:" esta-

blish you more firmly than ever on the foundation, by those very means which were intended to remove you from it, and to convert all the holy dispositions, and all the glorious hopes, which, like a stately edifice, "polished after the similitude of a palace," rested on that foundation, into an unsightly heap of ruins.

(5.) *He who does all this for them is God.*

This perfecting, and stablishing, and strengthening, and settling, are just what the Christian needs when called to combat, "not with flesh and blood, but with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places," and the assurance of obtaining it is well fitted to encourage and comfort him. But to realize this encouragement and consolation, he must "know and be sure" who it is that hath promised thus to perfect, and stablish, and strengthen, and settle. Such a promise from the most accomplished of men, from the highest of angels, from all good men, and all good angels together, would sound like bitter mockery; but it is God who, by the mouth of his holy Apostle, declares that he will perfect and stablish, strengthen and settle, the Christian combating with his subtle, active, cruel, and powerful spiritual adversary; and deeply as he feels how much is wanting in him for the conflict; how ready, how sure, if left to himself, to turn back in the day of battle; how powerless he is in the grasp of the strong man, the terrible one; how much in danger, so far as depends on any thing in himself, of being permanently moved from his steadfastness, and torn from that rock of salvation on which the whole fabric of his holiness, and spiritual enjoyment, and hopes rest: this is enough to sustain and encourage him.

HE can do all that he has here promised. He is infinite in power, and infinite, too, in wisdom. No enemy so powerful but he can restrain and subdue him; no enemy so crafty, but he can circumvent and disappoint him. No Christian so weak, but he can make him strong; no Christian so foolish, but he can make him wise. Is any thing too

hard for the Lord? To the Christian struggling with his spiritual foes, with a heart failing for fear, and an arm falling down with weariness, is addressed the words of the prophet: "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding."¹ There is no situation in which, in your resistance to your adversary, you can be placed, however full of painful exertion, anxiety, and suffering, in which he cannot give support, from which he cannot give deliverance.

Then he is disposed to do all that he has promised. He is "rich in mercy;" he is "ready to forgive." The love that dictated the promise secures the accomplishment. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven," who is not evil, who is good, only good, good continually, infinitely benignant, whose nature, as well as name, is love, how much more will he "give good gifts to his children" when they ask them? But this truth, so richly fraught with encouragement, will come more fully before us when we come to speak of the adjuncts of the promise, or of the manner in which it is given.

Finally, here, he who gives the promise will most assuredly perform it. He can do it; for he is infinitely powerful and wise: he is disposed to do it; for he is infinitely kind and compassionate: he will do it; for he is inviolably faithful. He can do all things, but he cannot lie. Nothing is impossible with him but the denying himself. "He is not a man that he should lie, nor the Son of man that he should repent: hath he said it, and will he not do it? hath he promised it, and will he not make it good?" No: "heaven and earth may pass away;" we know they shall pass away;

¹ Isa. xl. 27, 28.

“but one iota, one tittle,” of his declarations “shall not pass till all be fulfilled.”¹ As certainly as God is powerful and wise, merciful and faithful, so certain is it that he will not abandon the Christian resisting the subtle, active, powerful, cruel adversary of his soul; but will “make him perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle” him, by the very means which were intended for his spiritual ruin, thus “disappointing the devices of the crafty one, taking the wise in his own cunning, and turning the counsel of the froward headlong,”² saving the poor from the mouth of the devourer, and rescuing them out of the hand of him who is mightier than they.³

Such is the promise; and is it not full of encouragement to the Christian amid the privations, and exertions, and sufferings, to which resistance of his great adversary may expose him? Is it not well fitted to fill his heart with that joy of the Lord which is the strength of his people; to make him thank God, and take courage, saying, “If God be with me, who can be against me? Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: though I fall, I shall arise; though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. Greater is he who is with me than all that can be against me. Greater is He that is in us than he who is in the world.”⁴

§ 2. *The encouragement contained in the adjuncts of the promise.*

But even this is not all the encouragement and comfort which this passage is fitted to administer to the struggling Christian warrior. The adjuncts of the promise have the same character with the promise itself; its manner as well as its matter is full of consolation. This is the next subject

¹ Num. xxiii. 19. Matt. v. 18.

² Job. v. 12.

³ There is much emphasis given to the promise, by the insertion of the pronoun *αυτος* between the nominative *ὁ θεος πασης χαριτος* and the verbs belonging to it, though it is not noticed in our version. It was just a thing for Bengel to notice. “*Αυτος*, ipse—vos tantum vigilate et resistite hosti: reliqua Deus præstabit.—Conf. Josh. xiii. 6: conf. 1, ej. cap.

⁴ Rom. viii. 1. Micah vii. 8. 1 John iv. 4.

which calls for our consideration. What encouragement to him who resists the adversary to reflect, that He who has given to him such "exceeding great and precious promises," is "the God of all grace," the God "who has called him," "called him to his eternal glory in or by Christ Jesus," called him to this glory "after he has suffered a while!" These are fruitful themes, respecting which our meditation should be profitable as well as sweet, on which "our hearts should indite a good matter, and our tongues be as the pen of a ready writer."

(1.) *The God who has promised this is "the God of all grace."*

The first consolatory and encouraging consideration here brought forward is, that the God who has promised these blessings is the "God of all grace." The proper signification of grace is kindness, the disposition to communicate happiness; but is also often employed to denote those actions or gifts in which this disposition is manifested. In both of these closely related significations of the word, God is the "God of all grace."

He is the all-gracious God. His name is "the Lord; the Lord God, merciful and gracious in suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." His nature as well as his name is love. Fury, malignity, passion, is not in him; and, from the benignity of his nature, he is "keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." "This is his name, and this is his memorial to all generations." From his perfect holiness he cannot but hate sin, and punish the sinner "who goes on in his trespasses:" but he has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked;" on the contrary, He "wills him to turn from his evil ways, that he may live," be saved; while he is "ready to forgive," and "delights in mercy," in reference to those who, by the faith of the truth, are "in Christ Jesus." Every obstacle which prevents the manifestation of his love to them is removed. "As a father pities his children, he pities them." "A woman may forget her

sucking-child, she may not have compassion on the son of her womb;" but he can never forget them; and he can never remember them but with loving-kindness and tender mercy. And he rests in his love to them. He is "Jehovah, who changes not;" "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." "The mountains may depart, the hills may be removed; but God's loving-kindness will not depart from them, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed by the Lord God, who has mercy on them."

Is this his character? Then assuredly, amid all their afflictions, his children, "the brotherhood," may have "abundant consolation and good hope." If he has the power—and who can doubt that?—he must sustain, and comfort, and deliver. He can never allow them to become the prey of His and their adversary, who, "like a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he would devour." "He cannot deny himself;" and, if he cannot do this, he cannot but "deliver them out of the mouth of this lion;" he cannot but deliver them "from every evil work, and preserve them to his heavenly kingdom."¹ Being "the all-gracious God," he will assuredly "make them perfect, stablish, and strengthen them."

God is also the God of all grace, in the sense of benefit. He is the author and bestower of all true happiness. When he is termed "the God of all consolation," the meaning is, all true comfort comes from him, and he bestows on his people abundance of all they need. When he is termed "the God of peace," the meaning is, that he is the author and bestower of true peace. So, when he is called "the God of all grace," the meaning may be, all blessings come from him; He is their ever full, ever flowing fountain, and to his people he communicates them, in all the variety and abundance that their wants can require, or their capacities receive. He "blesses them with all spiritual and heavenly blessings." What can he want, all whose need the God of

¹ Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Ezek. xviii. 23, 32. Isa. liv. 10. 2 Tim. iv. 18.

grace, of all grace, promises to supply, "according to his glorious riches?" He can, he will, fit for the combat; he can, he will, sustain during the conflict; he can, he will, make victorious in the conflict; he can, he will, reward after the conflict. If there be any necessary blessing not included in "all grace," then the struggling Christian might have some cause to despond; but when Jehovah, "God Almighty" (rather all-sufficient) says, I am "the God of all grace," and "my grace is sufficient for thee;" well may he "glory in tribulation," "count it all joy to be brought into manifold temptations," and sing with the Apostle, "I have all, and abound; having nothing, I possess all things; I am complete in him. Most gladly will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of the God of all grace may rest on me; though troubled on every side, I am not distressed; though perplexed, I am not in despair; though persecuted, I am not forsaken; though cast down, I am not destroyed."¹ The God of all grace has pledged his word and oath to me that I shall want no good thing; and what would I have, what could I have more?

(2.) *This God of all grace has "called" the Christian "in Christ Jesus."*

A second consoling and encouraging consideration is, this God of all grace has called the Christian in Christ Jesus. The "called" is one of the distinguishing denominations of true Christians; in its fuller form, "the called of Christ Jesus;" "the called according to God's purpose and grace;" "the called who obtain the promised eternal inheritance;" and their calling is designated "a high calling," "a holy calling," a "calling not according to works, but according to God's own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." All mankind are called to God's service; and all mankind, to whom revelation comes, are "called" by God to the enjoyment of his

¹ 2 Cor. i. 3. Eph. i. 3. Col. iv. 19. Gen. xvii. 1. 2 Cor. xii. 9.

favour, as well as to obedience to his will; but in the case of the great majority, they are "called" in vain, ineffectually called. They will not listen to the call; they very imperfectly understand it; they obstinately refuse to obey it. And were it not that the sovereign kindness of God accompanies in certain cases the call of Providence and revelation with the effectual operation of his Spirit, the outward call with the inward call, this would be universally the case with mankind. All would continue in a state of ignorance, unbelief, disobedience, and alienation from God. All men would always be what all by nature are, "without God in the world."

But in the case of "a multitude that no man can number," God, in the exercise of his sovereign mercy, accompanies the call of his word and providence with the special influence of his Spirit; so that the calling is not in vain, but effectual. "It comes not in word merely, but in power, with the Holy Ghost, and much assurance." The sinner hears the call of the God of all grace; he understands it, he believes it, he is sweetly constrained to comply with it. This calling is the same thing which the Apostle calls "election according to the foreknowledge and purpose of God," by which Christians are spiritually separated from the rest of mankind, and put in possession of the blessings which flow from the shedding of the blood of sprinkling, which "speaketh better things than that of Abel." This "effectual calling," which is one of the characteristic blessings of the Christian salvation, and is the gate by which we enter into the enjoyment of all the rest, is well described in our Shorter Catechism as "a work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, as he is offered to us in the gospel." "This is a call," as Leighton beautifully says, "that goes deeper than the ear, a word spoken home to within; a touch of the Spirit of God on the heart, which hath a magnetic power to draw it, so that it cannot

choose but follow, and yet freely and sweetly chooses to follow; doth most gladly open to let in Jesus Christ, and his sweet government, upon his own terms; takes him, and all the reproaches and troubles that can come with him; and well it may, seeing, beyond a little passing trouble, abiding eternal glory."

This calling is said to be "in Christ Jesus," that is, either persons standing in a peculiar relation to Christ Jesus, identified as it were with him as its subjects; or, "through Christ Jesus," through his mediation, in consequence of his atonement, by his Spirit and Word. It is probably the last of these that is here the Apostle's idea. Men are called by the Father, through the Son. This fundamental blessing was enjoyed by those to whom the Apostle wrote. The God of all grace had called them out of darkness into his marvellous light; out of subjection to sin, and the world, and the god of this world, into the glorious liberty of his children. The communication of this blessing is a proof that God loves the individual on whom it is conferred with a special love; and a distinct intimation, that all the other blessings of that salvation, of which this is a constituent part, shall in due time be bestowed. The fact of their being called by the God of all grace, involves in it satisfactory evidence, that their spiritual adversary shall not ultimately prevail against them, that their afflictions cannot be permanent, and that they shall be made conducive to their final salvation. Listen to the Apostle Paul's development of this argument. "We know that all things"—he is referring to the afflictions which are accomplished in the brotherhood in this world—"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God; that are called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we say to

these things? If God be with us, who can be against us?"¹ Can the wiles or the ferocity of the roaring lion, the fraud or the fury of the great adversary, accomplish OUR ruin, who are the called, the called of the God of all grace?

(3.) *The God of all grace has called Christians to his eternal glory.*

A third consolatory and encouraging consideration is, that "the God of all grace has called the Christian to his eternal glory." The phrase, "called unto God's eternal glory," may either signify, called in order eternally to promote the glory of God, or called to enjoy or participate in the eternal glory of God. In either case, the words express a truth, and a truth well fitted to comfort and encourage Christians while struggling with their spiritual enemies.

The calling of the Christian, and the conferring on him all the blessings of the Christian salvation which grow out of it, have for their ultimate object, like every thing else in the new creation as in the old, the manifestation of God, the illustration of his excellence, the display of his glory. This idea is very finely brought out by the Apostle, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians: "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us with all heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, *to the praise of the glory of his grace*, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: that, in the dispensation

¹ Rom. viii. 28-31.

of the fulness of time, he might gather together into one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him : in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will ; that we should be *to the praise of his glory*, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted," or rather have received an inheritance, "after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation : in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance," both ours and yours, "until the redemption of the purchased possession, *to the praise of his glory.*"¹ Were the Christian to be allowed to fall a prey to his spiritual enemies, his calling, instead of being to God's eternal glory, would give cause to the adversary to speak reproachfully, saying, "The Lord was not able to bring them into the land which he had promised them." But Jehovah is determined, even through means of these babes and sucklings whom he calls, to perfect praise to himself, and to "still the enemy and the avenger." He has called them to be his people, and "formed them for himself, and they shall show forth his praise." His power, and wisdom, and faithfulness, and kindness shall be illustriously displayed, in the salvation of all the called ones. "His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure."² This is truth, important truth ; truth naturally enough expressed by the words, and truth well fitted to encourage and strengthen the Christian when conflicting with his great adversary.

Yet we are inclined to think the other view of the words expresses the Apostle's thought. He has called them to a participation of his eternal glory. The glory of God sometimes signifies the approbation of God. Thus the Jews are said to "receive honour (the same word) one of another, and not to seek the honour that cometh from God only." Thus,

¹ Eph. i. 3-14.² Num. xiv. 16. Psal. viii. 2. Isa. xliii. 21 ; xlv. 10.

all are said to “have sinned and come short of the glory of God;” and believers, justified through believing, are represented as “exulting in hope of that glory,” that approbation of which they had come short, and in which true glory and happiness consist. Here, as in some other places, there can be little doubt that “the glory of God” is the celestial blessedness; but still it is the celestial blessedness in a particular aspect. The glory of God is that which makes God glorious, his eternal glory that which makes him eternally glorious. Now, what is it which makes God glorious? His own inherent excellences, especially his moral excellences, his righteousness and benignity; in one word, his holiness. He is “glorious in holiness.” Now, the grand ultimate object of the calling of the Christian is, that he, to the highest degree of which his nature is capable, may be made a partaker of God’s holiness, which is his glory. He is called to the fellowship, as well as predestinated to the conformed, to the image of God’s dear Son, who is the “brightness of his glory and the express image of his person.” It is the purpose of God in calling him, and in giving him the adoption of sons to which he has been predestinated, that he shall be holy, as He the holy, holy, holy one is holy, perfect as he is perfect. It is his purpose that, in the kingdom of their Father, the Father of Lights, his called ones should shine forth radiant with his light, glorious in his glory; and in the only sense in which eternity can be truly predicated of them, or of any thing that belongs to them, that their glory shall be eternal, that “they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and like stars in the firmament, for ever and ever.” Now, no assault from Satan, no calamities, no afflictions, can prevent this glorious consummation—nay, all their afflictions will be found to have been but disciplinary means of preparing them for this grand result of all the Divine dispensations to them—the making them “partakers of his holiness,” which is his glory.¹

¹ 1 Cor. i. 9. Rom. viii. 29. Heb. xii. 10.

(4.) *The afflictions are moderate in degree, short in duration, and form a part of the Divine plan for their ultimate salvation.*

A fourth consolatory and encouraging consideration suggested, is derived from the peculiar character of the afflictions to which the brotherhood are exposed ; they are comparatively moderate in degree and short in duration ; they form a part of the Divine plan resulting from Divine appointment ; and they are closely connected with the great end of their calling, their coming to a participation in the glory of God. The God of all grace has called you to his eternal glory "after ye have suffered a while, or a little." These words, "after ye have suffered a while," have been closely connected by some with the clause that follows, "After ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." The laws of the language would warrant either mode of connexion ; but it is plain that the promise is not one which is not to be fulfilled till Christians have suffered a while. The first promise refers to preparation for suffering, the two next to help under suffering, the last to the happy result of suffering. God calls his people to participate in his eternal glory, but not to participate in it "till they have suffered a while," or a little. The word may refer either to time or degree. In either case, a truth, and a consolatory one, is expressed. The afflictions to which the brotherhood are exposed in this world are comparatively moderate in degree. They are often heavy when compared with those of other men, and are often felt as heavy by those who bear them, making them breathe out, "I am oppressed ; undertake for me." They are always lighter than they easily might be ; always lighter than strict justice would require them to be. Every thing to a sinner, short of the severest suffering he is capable of, is mercy. God does not, however, "suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear, but with the temptation gives a way of escape, that they may be able to bear it ;" and especially they are mo-

derate when compared with the “far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” which is to follow them.

They are limited in duration. Seasons of very severe affliction are not ordinarily of long duration; they bear usually but a small proportion to the whole of human life. How inconceivably small a proportion do they bear to the eternity of coming glory! Surely, then, whether he look on their measure or their period, their degree or their duration, the Christian may well “reckon the sufferings of the present time not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in him.”

Then, these afflictions are a part of the Divine plan. It is as much a part of the Divine plan to put them in possession of the fellowship of his eternal glory after they have suffered a while, as to put them in possession of it at all. “It is the Father’s good pleasure to give them the kingdom;” but it is equally the Father’s good pleasure that “through much tribulation they enter into that kingdom.” It is his determination that they “shall reign with Christ,” but it is equally his determination that they “shall first suffer with him.”¹

And finally, here, this connexion, though an appointed one, is not an arbitrary one. The glory not only comes after the sufferings, but it is, in some sense, the result of them. Afflictions are, under the Divine blessing, appropriate means of sanctification; of forming the character which fits for the holy happiness of heaven; ‘that prepared place for a prepared people.’ The truth on this subject is strikingly stated by the Apostle from his own experience: “Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are unseen are eternal.” “Who would refuse to suffer a

¹ Luke xii. 32. Acts xiv. 32. Rom. viii. 17.

while, a little while, any thing outward or inward he sees fit? How soon shall this be over, past, and overpaid in the very entry, the beginning of that glory, that shall never end!"¹

IV. CONCLUSION.

It now only remains that we shortly illustrate the concluding clause of the verse, which is very generally considered as a doxology. The words are, "To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." The word *be* is inserted by our translators, who consider it as an ascription of glory and dominion to God. The word *is* might as well have been inserted, in which case it is an assertion that glory and dominion belong to God. Had the preceding verse been a prayer or a thanksgiving, the words would likely have been meant as a doxology; but, following a promise, they seem to state something corresponding to the promise. "His is the glory for ever and ever," and therefore he can confer on his people that glory to which he has called them, after they have suffered a while. He has not only an essential glory peculiar to himself, and of which no creature can participate. He has a communicable glory; "the riches of his glory," as the Apostle expresses it, by the bestowing of which on others he can make them glorious. He is "the Father of glory," as well as the God of all grace, who can give not only grace but also glory. And as "glory for ever and ever" belongs to Him who has "called Christians to his eternal glory after they have suffered a while," so "dominion" (a word denoting both power and authority) "for ever and ever" belongs to Him, who, as the God of grace, promises that he will make perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle his people. He has power and right to do whatever pleases him, and therefore can do what he has said. "His is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all in the heaven

¹ Leighton. 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17.

and in the earth is his; his is the kingdom, and he is exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of Him, and he reigneth over all; and in his hand is power and might; and in his hand it is to make great, and give strength to all." He who has glory for ever and ever, can give to his called that fellowship of his eternal glory which he has promised; and he whose is the dominion, the power, and the authority for ever, is "of power to establish his people according to the gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ." He is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." He can "make them perfect in every good work to do his will, working in them that which is well pleasing in his sight." He is "able to keep them from falling, and to present them faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy."¹ It deserves notice that the Apostle concludes his epistle as he began it, by turning the minds of those to whom he wrote, to God, and to the same features in the Divine character—those which make him a fit object of our love and dependence—his kindness and his might. In the beginning he speaks of Him as the God of abundant mercy, who has power to keep his people for the inheritance he has destined for them, and for which he is preparing them; and here he speaks of Him as the God of all grace, whose is the dominion, to whom all the power and authority rightfully belong.

The Apostle adds an emphatic "Amen"—a word in reference to statement, expressive of firm faith; in reference to promises, of confident hope and ardent desire. In the first instance it is equivalent to, 'It is most certainly so; this is the very truth most sure.' In the second, 'I trust it shall be so; I desire that it may be so.' Such, then, is the comfort and encouragement by which the Apostle seeks to strengthen the brotherhood amid the afflictions which must be accomplished in them in the world.

¹ 1 Chron. xxix, 11, 12. Jude 24.

If any thing extrinsic could add force to the sentiments expressed in these words—sentiments so instinct with life, so fitted to impart spiritual vigour to the exhausted spirit of the Christian, worn out with watching the wiles and resisting the attacks of his great adversary, it is to be found in the circumstances of him who uttered them. “Truth,” such truth, “from his lips prevails with double sway.” The word of warning, the word of instruction, the word of promise, the word of encouragement, come all with peculiar force from the lips of Him, to whom on a most memorable occasion the Master said, “Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” He speaks the things which he knew, he testifies what he had seen and felt. He had disregarded the Master’s warning, and the consequence had been shameful discomfiture in his conflict with the great enemy; aggravated sin, followed by deep penitence, and confirmed attachment to the cause of Christ. He had found how faithful he is who had promised, and how able he is to do as he had said. He had preserved him from apostasy when on its very brink; and, notwithstanding the partial success of his spiritual adversary, had stablished, strengthened, settled him; set him on a rock and established his goings. How emphatic the warning, “Your enemy, the devil, goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour,” from him who had experienced both his wiles and his ferocity, and would bear about with him the scars of his wounds while he lived! How forcible the injunction, “Resist the devil;” and that you may do so, “Be sober, and wakeful, and steadfast in the faith,” from him, who, notwithstanding repeated warnings, did not watch and pray, and therefore entered into temptation, and fell before it, and whose failure in faith had brought him so near destruction and despair; had made him fall into sin, and but for the God of all grace would have made him fall into perdition! How consoling and encouraging the promise, “The God of all grace, who hath

called you unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, will make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you ; His is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever," from him whom the God of all grace, in the person of his Son, had so " out of weakness made strong," so strengthened in the faith as to make him one of the chief pillars of the church while he lived ; and when he died enabled him to glorify God, confessing, amid the protracted tortures of a peculiarly cruel martyrdom, the Master he had once thrice denied ! We cannot help thinking that the Saviour's words, " When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," were ringing in the Apostle's ears when he wrote these words. And certainly never were addressed to the tempted, struggling, worn out, afflicted Christian soldier—words more full of warning, instruction, consolation, and encouragement. They have by the accompanying power of the Spirit of Jesus strengthened many a brother. They have been " words in season" to many a tempted, afflicted, perplexed, downcast, weary heart ; and will continue to be so, as long as these afflictions continue to be accomplished in the brotherhood in the world. Oh, may we, my brethren, through their means, be made humble and cautious, vigilant and believing, " steadfast and immoveable," rooted and built up in Christ, strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness ; giving thanks to the Father who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light ; who hath delivered us from the powers of darkness, and hath translated us unto the kingdom of his dear Son ; so that, full of the strength which is the result of the joy of the Lord, glorying in tribulation, and rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, we may " walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." ¹ " Consider what has been said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things."

¹ Col. i. 10-13.

DISCOURSE XXIV.

POSTSCRIPT OF THE EPISTLE.

1 PET. v. 12-14.—By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you (as I suppose), I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand. The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son. Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

“ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” and “all Scripture,” too, “is profitable for doctrine, and for reproof, for correction and for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good work.” In the mines of Peru, there are veins of peculiar richness, but even their rubbish is valuable. In the Holy Scriptures, there are portions of peculiar importance, excellence, and usefulness, but there is nothing trivial, nothing valueless. The superficial thinker may, indeed, find it difficult, it may be impossible, for him to derive instruction or improvement from many passages of Scripture, and may, on this account, rashly call in question their Divine origin, or indulge in reflections against the Divine wisdom, for allowing such passages a place in the inspired volume; but it is his own imbecility, or ignorance, or inattention, that is wholly to blame; for it may be safely affirmed, that there is no passage of Scripture respecting which the pious, diligent, docile, inquirer, cannot easily see that it may have served, or

may yet serve some important and useful purpose ; and that there are very few from which, after serious consideration, he cannot draw for himself lessons which may be turned to account for the guidance of his conduct, and the improvement of his character.

To be able to extract from what have been called the barren, from what ought to be called the less exuberant, passages of Scripture, the instruction, and warning, and reproof, and consolation which they are intended and fitted to communicate, is a talent which every Christian should be desirous of acquiring, as, without its possession and employment, a considerable part of those Scriptures which are “able to make men wise to salvation,” will be utterly useless to him : and it is not one of the least important duties of a public teacher of Christianity, to instruct his audience in the best way of extracting spiritual improvement from this class of scripture passages ; on the one hand, guarding them against that passion for allegory, which leads men to make the plainest statements of the sacred writers the vehicle of the dreams of their own imagination, thus converting a Divine oracle into a human figment ; and, on the other, showing how important purposes are served, by what at first sight may seem inappropriate and unnecessary statements, and how replete such passages, when viewed in their connexion and design, often are with religious and moral instruction.

The subject of to-day's discourse, the postscript of the First Epistle of the Apostle Peter, belongs to the class of Scripture passages of which we have been speaking. It is not, indeed, to be compared, in point of intrinsic importance, deep personal interest, and extensive usefulness, with the admirable doctrinal and practical discussions by which it is preceded, and which, for a considerable time past, have not unpleasantly nor unprofitably, I trust, formed the subject of our consideration, when we have come together on the first day of the week, to wait on the “doctrine of the apostles ;” but it is far indeed from being unimportant, uninteresting,

or useless : and if it wants many of the attractions which belong to them, it will be found to have attractions peculiar to itself. It is with the word, as it is with the works of God. "There is one glory in the sun, and another glory in the moon, and another glory in the stars, and one star differeth from another star in glory." Let us look at the passage a little more closely, that we may perceive its meaning and ascertain its use.

It obviously forms a postscript to the Epistle, which, as a doctrinal and hortatory address, is most appropriately and gracefully concluded in the eleventh verse. This postscript is occupied with recapitulation, salutation, exhortation, and benediction. The recapitulation is contained in the twelfth verse. The salutation in the thirteenth. The exhortation in the first clause, and the benediction in the last clause, of the fourteenth. Let us attend to them briefly, in their order.

I. RECAPITULATION.

It has been supposed, by some interpreters of high name, that the twelfth verse has in it nothing recapitulatory, but that the Epistle referred to in it, is not that which the Apostle had just finished, but one that he had sent to the same churches on some former occasion. This supposition is an entirely gratuitous one. It is not required by the words, though, were it otherwise supported, the words might easily be reconciled with it. But there is no trace in Scripture, or in ecclesiastical history, of the Apostle having written such an Epistle ; and there is satisfactory evidence that he did not write it, for he terms an epistle which he subsequently addressed to these churches, his *second* Epistle. "This second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you ; in both which, I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance."

The *recapitulation* refers to three things, the *subject* of the Epistle, and the duty of Christians in reference to it ; the

form of it, a testimony and an exhortation, and a brief testimony and exhortation; the testimony, that “the grace of God,” which is the great subject of the Epistle, is “the true grace of God,” and the exhortation to stand, with regard to that grace; and, finally, the *mode* of writing or transmitting the Epistle, “By Silvanus, a faithful brother.”

CHAP. I.—THE SUBJECT OF THE EPISTLE.

§ 1. *The grace of God.*

“The grace of God” properly signifies the kindness, the free favour of God, as a principle in the Divine mind; but is often employed to signify the deeds of kindness, the gifts and the benefits in which this principle finds expression. It has been common to interpret the phrase here as equivalent to the gospel, the revelation of God’s grace; and the Apostle has been considered as affirming that the doctrine which those he was writing to had embraced, and to which they had adhered, to use the Apostle Paul’s phrase, “which they had received, and in which they stood,” was the true gospel. But I doubt if the gospel is ever called “the grace of God” in the New Testament; and I equally doubt, whether the words, thus understood, are an accurate statement of what this Epistle actually contains. There are just two other passages in the New Testament, in which “the grace of God” has been supposed to be a designation of the gospel. After stating the message of mercy, which the ministers of reconciliation are called to deliver, the Apostle in his Epistle to the Corinthians, says, “We beseech you that ye receive not the grace, or this grace, of God in vain.”¹ The reference here is, no doubt, to the gospel, but the meaning of the phrase, “the grace of God,” is plainly just, this Divine favour, this benefit which so expresses, and, as it were, embodies the Divine grace. And, in the Epistle to Titus, the same Apostle states, that “the grace of God,

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 1.

bringing salvation to all," has been manifested, or has "appeared, teaching" those who apprehend it "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world."¹ The grace of God is often said to mean here the gospel, but the gospel is the manifestation, the revelation of this grace; and the truth taught in this passage is, that the free, sovereign mercy of God, when it is apprehended by the sinner, is the true principle of holiness in his heart and life. Let a man but really believe the grace of God, know it in truth, and he can be an ungodly, immoral man no longer. And as there is no satisfactory evidence that "the grace of God" is, properly speaking, a synonym for the gospel; so, on the other hand, if we read this Epistle carefully, we will not find that the sum of it is a testimony, that the gospel, as received and held by the churches addressed, was the true gospel. That question is never mooted, but obviously throughout taken for granted. It would be a correct account of the Epistle to the Galatians, that it is a testimony that the gospel preached to them by the Apostle was, in opposition to that preached to them by the Judaizing teachers, the true gospel; but the character of *this* Epistle is in no degree controversial. What "the grace of God" in the passage before us means, will be most satisfactorily ascertained, by inquiring what it means in the Epistle of which it is represented as one of the great subjects. In the tenth verse of the first chapter, the Apostle speaks of "the grace" of which the ancient prophets prophesied as to come to Christians, and in the thirteenth verse of that chapter, of "the grace which was to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ." That grace is obviously the Christian salvation in its heavenly and spiritual blessings, enjoyed partially on earth, fully in heaven. This grace is a leading subject of the Epistle. The specific nature, and transcendant glory and excellence of those blessings, in which the grace of God is manifested, are declared. Chris-

¹ Tit. ii. 11, 12.

tians are represented as “elect, according to the foreknowledge of God,” spiritually separated from the world; sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ; begotten to a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; as having tasted that the Lord is gracious, by being constituted a chosen generation, a spiritual temple, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; as having ‘salvation,’ complete deliverance from all evil, laid up for them in heaven, where it is ready to be revealed in the last time, while they are kept for it by the power of God through faith, and on receiving which, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus, they shall be glad with exceeding joy, rejoicing “with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.” This is “the grace of God” which the Apostle here says he had given a testimony concerning, in the Epistle which he has just closed.

§ 2. *The Christian's duty in reference to this grace, “to stand.”*

The other subject of the Epistle, according to its author, is the Christian's duty in reference to this grace of God. At first sight, the words in which we think the duty of Christians, in reference to the grace, is very briefly, but very comprehensively summed up; the words rendered by our translators “in which ye stand,” seem merely to be a part of the testimony respecting “the grace of God,” and to denote rather the Christian's privilege than his duty; just as when the Apostle Paul says, “By faith ye have entrance into this grace wherein ye stand.”¹ But the two expressions are not the same. The phrase before us is literally “into which,” which may mean, in reference to which, or until which, but which cannot mean strictly *in* which.¹ It deserves notice, that the Apostle speaks of having exhorted in the Epistle; but, as the words are ordinarily understood, there is

¹ Rom. v. 2.

² *Es*, never can mean *in*; as “motion towards” can never be identified with “rest in.”

no subject of exhortation referred to. In some ancient manuscripts the reading is not “ye stand,” but “stand ye;”¹ expressive not of an assertion, but of a command or exhortation. If that reading be adopted, and it has been, by some learned men, then the meaning is, “in reference to which grace of God,” or until which grace of God is fully brought unto you, “stand ye.” This most certainly is the sum and substance of the duty enjoined on Christians in this Epistle, the standing firm, amid all temptations, in the faith and practice of Christianity with a reference to the grace of Christ, as persons who have already been made partakers of it, as persons who hope to be made partakers of it in far larger measure, and to obtain full participation of it through “standing.” As the whole doctrinal subject of the Epistle is the grace of Christ, so the whole practical subject of the Epistle is the duty of Christians in reference to that grace, and the whole of that duty may be summed up in one word, “stand.” The whole practical part of the Epistle, is just the development of the first exhortation: “Wherefore,” that is, seeing ye have received these promises and hopes, “gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.” This is a favourite compendium of Christian duty with the Apostle Paul.²

CHAP. II.—THE FORM OF THE EPISTLE.

It is a testimony and exhortation respecting the grace of God.

The Apostle notices not only the subjects of the Epistle, but the *form* in which he has treated them. His statements with regard to the grace of God take the form of “a testi-

¹ Ζητει. Lachmann.

² 1 Cor. xvi. 13. Gal. v. 1. Eph. vi. 14. Phil. iv. 1. 2 Thess. ii. 15.

mony.” His statements with regard to the Christian’s duty take the form of “an exhortation,” “I have written, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God, in reference to which do ye stand.” We would naturally have expected, from exhorting coming before testifying, that the sum of the exhortation should have preceded the sum of the testimony. But it is a common peculiarity in Hebrew composition, of which we have many instances in the New Testament, after dividing a subject into two parts, to take up the second part first, and then revert to the first. It would be more according to the usage of modern language to say, “Testifying that the grace of God, which ye as Christians enjoy, is the true grace of God, and exhorting you to stand in reference to this grace.”

The testimony in the Epistle respecting the grace of God which they enjoyed, that is, the blessings of the Christian salvation, is, that it is the true grace of God. The sum of that part of the Epistle that is occupied with doctrine is just, Ye Christians are the *true* spiritual people of God, of whom the Jews, his ancient external people, were types, and the blessings you enjoy are the true spiritual blessings, of which the external blessings of the ancient economy were the types. To use the language of John, “They out of the fulness of him, who is the Only-begotten of God, the revealer of him in whose bosom he was from the beginning, who is full of grace and truth, true grace, had received grace for,” in the room of “grace,” the blessings of the new dispensation in the room of the blessings of the old; “for the law,” which was a grace, a favour, and a great one, “came by Moses, but the grace and truth,” the true grace, the great manifestation of the love of God in the blessings of a spiritual and eternal salvation, “came by Jesus Christ.”¹ This, says Peter, is “the grace that is come to you,” and “this is the true grace of God.”

The Apostle’s declaration on this subject takes the form

¹ John i. 16, 17.

of a testimony. Not a demonstration on abstract principles, not a statement of his own individual opinion, but the declaration of a testimony with which, in common with his apostolic brethren, he had been "put in trust" by God. "The grace" to be brought to the true people of God under the Messiah, was "a mystery kept secret from former ages and generations;" "as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God had prepared for them that love him." That was "the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, which God had ordained before the world, unto the glory" of his people under the last and best dispensation of his grace. "But God revealed these things unto his holy apostles by his Spirit, and they having received the Spirit which is of God, and having the mind of Christ, testified the things which he revealed to them, not in words taught by man's wisdom, but in words taught by the Holy Ghost."¹

As the declaration as to truth took the form of "testimony," so the declaration with regard to duty took the form of "exhortation." The practical part of the Epistle is not a dry system of ethics, but a warm exhortation, showing Christians what it is to stand, how they were to be enabled to stand, and why they should stand.

The Apostle farther notices, that the testimony and the exhortation contained in this Epistle was a brief testimony and exhortation: "In few words exhorting and testifying." Here, as well as in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the Apostle says, at the close of the comparatively long Epistle to the Hebrews, "I have written a letter to you in few words," we apprehend the reference is rather to the condensation than to the brevity, strictly so called, of the compositions. This is not a short epistle, and the Epistle to the Hebrews is one of the longest in the New Testament; but there is no unnecessary diffuseness, no waste of words;

¹ Rom. xvi. 25. 1 Cor. ii. 7, 9, 13.

and on this account, as well as higher ones, Peter's letter, like Paul's, is "weighty and powerful." In our illustrations of the Epistle, we have had abundant opportunities of observing in how few words Peter wraps up pregnant thoughts, exhibits far-reaching views.

What the Apostle represents as the characteristics of his Epistle, are equally those of the apostolic epistles generally. They are occupied with brief, condensed testimonies and exhortations respecting the grace of God, and the duty of Christians in reference to that grace. And as the Apostles' discourses, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, are the models which Christian ministers should follow in preaching the gospel to the world lying under the wicked one; so their epistles are the models which they should follow in teaching the doctrine and the law of Christ to the churches of the saints, to "them who have believed through grace." Every Christian teacher's system of instruction should embrace in it a clear, distinct statement of the true grace of God, of the exceeding great and precious blessings of the Christian salvation; he should conduct his people throughout the length and breadth of the goodly heritage assigned them even here below; and he should often take them up as it were into an exceeding high mountain, and teaching them to apply the prospective glass of the gospel to the eye of faith, show them the glories of the kingdom which awaits them in the land that is far off; if he does not do this, he is not a minister of the gospel at all; and it should equally embrace in it a clear statement and a powerful enforcement of the duties which lie on Christians, as partakers of the grace of God in truth. And his doctrinal preaching must all wear the form of "a testimony;" a declaration of what God the Lord says of what is the mind of Christ, of what the Holy Ghost has declared,—not of human conjectures and reasonings, but of Divine revelations; and his practical preaching must all have the form of exhortation,—not occupying the mind with ethical disquisitions and questions, but pressing home clearly announced Divine injunctions on the conscience

and the heart. The testimony and the exhortation must go together, and be presented as closely connected,—the one the foundation, the other the building. The grace, the true grace, must be declared, in order that they who believe in Christ be careful to maintain good works. It is also very desirable that all this should be done briefly, “in few words;” that is, that the teaching, though plain, should be condensed. The time afforded for Christian teaching is necessarily very limited, and many Christians have few means of Christian instruction besides public teaching. It is therefore a matter of great importance that the discourses of a Christian minister should contain as much matter as, without overtasking the minds of the hearers, can be brought into them.

CHAP. III.—THE MODE OF THE WRITING OR TRANSMISSION OF THE EPISTLE.

The only other thing in the recapitulatory part of the postscript that requires attention, is the mode of the writing or of the transmission of the letter, “By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written.” In the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles of Paul, we read of a person of this name. In the Epistles he is always termed Silvanus, in the Acts his name is always contracted into Silas. Some have supposed from the last name and Tertius, the one a Hebrew the other a Latin word, having the same signification, that he is the person who performed the office of amanuensis to Paul when writing to the Romans.¹ All that we know of him with certainty is, that he was a distinguished “teacher and prophet” in the church of Jerusalem, “a chief man among the brethren;” that he was associated along with Barsabas, surnamed Judas, and sent with Paul and Barnabas to the Gentile churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, to carry those letters of the apostles,

¹ Acts xv. 22, 27, 34, 40; xvi. 25; xvii. 7, 10, 15. 2 Cor. ii. 19. 1 Thess. i. 1. Rom. xvi. 22.

elders, and brethren, containing their decision of the question respecting the obligation of the law on Christian Gentiles which had been referred to them; that on the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas, he accompanied the former on his journey through Asia Minor to Macedonia; that he remained behind at Berea for a short time, when Paul was obliged to flee from that place, but rejoined the Apostle at Corinth; and that he is mentioned along with Timothy by the Apostle in the inscription of the Epistles to the Thessalonians. It would appear that he had gone into the Parthian empire, it may be sent by Paul, where Peter seems to have been when he wrote this Epistle; for the tradition that this is another person of the same name has no foundation.

It has been made a question whether Silvanus was Peter's amanuensis in writing the Epistle, or his messenger in carrying it into Asia Minor and the adjacent regions. The expressions are applicable to either case, and it is quite possible he might be both. Had he meant to remain with Peter, it is likely his salutation would have been given as well as Mark's, and the phraseology is that commonly used in reference to the bearers of the Apostolic letters.

Peter describes Silvanus as a "brother." All men are brothers. "Have we not one Father? hath not one God created us?" "for we are all *his* offspring."¹ All Christians are brothers. "One is your Father, and ye are all brethren," says our Lord: "holy brethren," as the Apostle has it, "partakers of the heavenly calling." All Christian office-bearers are brothers. Thus Peter speaks of his beloved brother Paul.² It is in this last sense probably that Peter here uses the appellation. We know that Silas was a teacher and a prophet, and we know that, when the whole church are called "saints," the office-bearers are distinguished by being called "brethren."³ The word "faithful," the epithet given to Silvanus, sometimes signifies believing, sometimes trustworthy, sometimes distinguished by fidelity. I have no

¹ Mal. ii. 10. Acts xvii. 28.

² Matt. xxiii. 8. Heb. iii. 1. 2 Pet. iii. 15.

³ Phil. iv. 21, 22.

doubt it was applicable to Silvanus in all these shades of meaning. As the word is connected with "to you," for it is not "I wrote to you," but "a faithful brother to you," I think it likely that it was meant to convey the two last ideas, a minister of Christ who has proved himself trustworthy by his faithful discharge of duty to you.

The parenthetical words rendered "as I suppose,"¹ do not imply the idea of uncertainty, as our English word suppose does. It is the word the Apostle uses when he says, "We *conclude* that a man is justified by faith, and not by works of the law," "I *reckon* the sufferings of the present time not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed," "Abraham *accounted* that God was able to raise the dead."² There was no doubt in any of these cases, and we have no cause to think there was any doubt here either. It is, "I have sent my letter by Silvanus, and the reason why I have done so is, that I have perfect confidence in his fidelity, and know that he has approved himself a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf." The apostles were accustomed to send their letters, not by ordinary messengers, but by individuals of known and accredited character. Paul sent the Epistle to the Ephesians and Colossians by Tychicus; the first Epistle to the Corinthians and Thessalonians by Timothy; the second to the Corinthians by Titus; the Epistle to Philemon by Onesimus; the Epistle to the Romans by Phebe, a deaconess. Thus two objects were gained; the apostles were assured that the epistles would be delivered, and the churches assured that the epistles were not surreptitious. It is a piece of Christian wisdom to employ men in engagements for which they are peculiarly fitted. Silvanus, intimately acquainted with the churches to whom the Apostle wrote, was far better fitted to be his messenger, than an equally good and gifted man who was a stranger to them. Silvanus bringing the letter would be to them abundant proof of its authenticity. And it is

¹ ὡς λογίζομαι.

² Rom. iii. 28; vili. 18. Heb. xi. 19.

exceedingly becoming in men who, like Peter, are pillars in the church, men of long standing and high influence, to comfort the hearts and increase the usefulness of their younger brethren, by, on proper occasions, proclaiming the confidence they have in them, and the esteem with which they regard them : and, on the other hand, nothing is more unworthy than for one of Christ's servants, through little jealousies, to withhold from another all the support which he called for expression of merited good opinion is calculated to communicate. So much for the recapitulation.

II. THE SALUTATION.

The salutation contained in the 13th verse is in these words : "The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you ; and so doth Marcus my son." To salute is to kiss or embrace ; here it plainly means to cherish and express cordial affection, of which a salute is the token.

§ 1.—*The salutation of the Church in Babylon.*

You will notice that the words "church that is," are printed in italics, intimating that there is nothing in the original to answer to them. The text literally rendered is, "She at Babylon, co-elect, saluteth you." It has been a question among interpreters, whether the person here mentioned is a real or figurative person, an individual or a society. Some have supposed that it refers to some Christian woman, perhaps of the name of Suneclecta, the Greek word rendered elected together with you, probably of great worth and usefulness, and perhaps rank and wealth, resident at Babylon, well known for her good works—one like John's "elect lady ;" though some have supposed that she and her elect sister were sister churches, and their children the church members. Others have supposed that it was Peter's "sister-wife," that is, Christian wife, whom we know from the Apostle Paul he was accustomed "to lead about"

with him in his apostolic labours, and who was at this time residing in Babylon, and that Marcus, mentioned immediately after, was not Mark the evangelist, but their son. Either of these suppositions, no doubt, may be true; but the probability seems on the side of the view taken by our translators, and by the great body of interpreters in all ages. "She at or in Babylon, co-elect," seems to be the Christian society there.

It has been disputed whether Babylon is to be understood mystically or literally here; whether it means Rome, which in the Apocalypse is called Babylon, or Jerusalem, which, now apostate, better deserved that name than her own, or the city so well known both in profane and sacred history. In the absence of any thing like evidence on the other side, we must hold that whatever Babylon may signify in a book full of symbols, here it must be interpreted just as we do Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. Our city is sometimes called Athens, from its situation and from its being a seat of learning; but it would not do to argue that a letter came from Edinburgh because it was dated from Athens. It is remarkable that the Roman Catholics, who are very shy of admitting that Rome is the Babylon of the Apocalypse, generally hold that it is referred to here. The reason is, that if Babylon does not mean Rome here, there is nothing in Scripture that can be made to look like evidence for the fact, on which the whole enormous fabric of the papal supremacy is built, that Rome was at any time the residence of Peter. So far from being able to prove that the Pope is the legitimate successor of Peter in a universal episcopate, of which Rome, the capital of the world, was the appropriate seat, there is no evidence in Scripture that he was ever in that city; and all that ecclesiastical history makes in some measure probable is, that he came there to suffer martyrdom. Surely those who can believe such things, on such evidence, are given up to strong delusions. Allowing Babylon to be the proper name of the place referred to, it has been questioned whether it refers to the city generally known both in

profane and sacred history by that appellation, or Seleucia, a city in its neighbourhood, on the other side of the Tigris, which is said sometimes to have received its name, or a small garrison town in Egypt known by this appellation. The first opinion is the more probable one, for there is no reason to think that at this time Babylon, though greatly dilapidated, was a mere heap of ruins; though I think it very likely that the word does not refer exclusively to the city, but to the region known as Babylon or Babylonia.*

It is the elect dispersion of Babylonia sending their kind regards to the co-elected dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. They, having obtained like precious faith, were holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, co-elect, equally with them elect according to the foreknowledge of God, spiritually separated, obedient to the faith, and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. Genuine Christians of the most distant countries, ought to cherish the kindest affections towards each other, and avail themselves of every proper opportunity of expressing them. And Christian ministers should gladly stir the sacred flame, and give facilities for its manifestation. Apostolical influence was always employed in this way. Alas! how often has clerical influence been put forth in the opposite direction! The leaders of Christ's people have often made them to err, to wander from the path of Catholic unity and love, and kept them wandering. "Blessed are the peace-makers."

§ 2. *The salutation of Marcus.*

But the Apostle transmits the cordial good wishes not only of the church in the region where he was sojourning to their brethren in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, but also the kind remembrances of an individual Christian man and minister: "So doth Marcus, my son." We know Peter was married, and ecclesiastical tradition declares that he had children;² but we have no evidence

* See note A.

² Clemens Alexandrinus—*Stromata*. Lib. iii.

that he had sons, or that any of his sons were in the Christian ministry. On the other hand, we do know that there was a very intimate connexion between Peter and John Mark. We find Peter going to his mother's house, as to his ordinary abode in Jerusalem, after having been miraculously delivered from prison; and all antiquity represents Mark's gospel as written from information received from Peter, a tradition carrying with it great probability, as none of the gospels has more of that circumstantiality which a narrative coming from an eyewitness naturally possesses, and whatever does Peter credit is rather cast into the shade, while his faults are very plainly stated. There is nothing remarkable in Peter calling Mark his son, especially as it is likely he was the means of his conversion. Paul calls Onesimus his "son, begotten in his bonds," and Timothy his "own son in the faith."¹ "Marcus my son" is equivalent to who is to me instead of a son, or, as Paul has it in reference to Timothy, "who serves with me as a son in the gospel."² It does not appear that, at this time, Mark had ever seen the churches to which Peter wrote; but, though strangers in the flesh, they were dear to him in the Lord. That Christian minister has not the proper spirit of his office, who does not cherish an affectionate regard for every Christian church, for every Christian man, throughout the world.

III. EXHORTATION.

We come now to the exhortation contained in this postscript: "Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity." These words may be understood generally as an exhortation to mutual love, and to all proper expressions of it. 'See that ye love one another, and show that ye love one another;' and in this general sense they embody an injunction

¹ Philem. 10. 1 Tim. i. 2.

² Μαρκον δε υιον κατα πνευμα καλει, αλλ' ου κατα σαρκα.—ŒCUMENTIUS.

obligatory on all Christian churches in all countries, and in all ages. But there is no reason to doubt, but that the Apostle meant the churches he addressed to understand and comply with the injunction in the plain literal meaning of the words. Salutation by kissing was the ordinary way of expressing friendly affection in those countries and in that age; and the command is not more strange than if the Apostle, addressing a church in our country and times, were to say, 'Give to each other the right hand of fellowship.' We find similar advices given to other churches.¹ "Salute one another with a holy kiss."² "Greet ye one another with an holy kiss."³ "Greet all the brethren with an holy kiss."⁴ That the Apostle meant the members of the churches, on receiving this epistle, to salute one another, is certain; that he meant, that at all their religious meetings they should do so, is not improbable. That he meant to make this an everlasting ordinance in all Christian churches, though it has sometimes been asserted, has never been proved, and is by no means likely. That the practice prevailed extensively, perhaps universally, in the earlier ages, is established on satisfactory evidence. "After the prayers," says Justin Martyr, who lived in the earlier part of the second century, giving an account in his apology of the religious customs of the Christians, "after the prayers, we embrace each other with a kiss." Tertullian speaks of it as an ordinary part of the religious services of the Lord's day; and in the apostolical constitutions, as they are termed, the manner in which it was performed is particularly described. "Then let the men apart, and the women apart, salute each other with a kiss in the Lord." Origen's note on Romans xvi. 16, is, "From this passage the custom was delivered to the churches, that, after prayer, the brethren should salute one another with a kiss." This token of love was generally given at the Holy Supper. It was likely, from the prevalence of this custom, that the calumny of Christians indulg-

¹ Rom. xvi. 16.² 1 Cor. xvi. 20.³ 2 Cor. xiii. 12.⁴ 1 Thess. v. 26.

ing in licentiousness at their religious meetings originated ; and it is not improbable that, in order to remove every thing like an occasion to calumniators, the practice which, though in itself innocent, had become not for the use of edifying, was discontinued.

Some Christian societies still retain the practice, and even insist on it as a term of communion. We have no objection to the first ; but we must protest against the second. Surely this is not one of the points on which the peace of the church should be disturbed, or her communion broken. They who observe it, should not condemn them that observe it not ; and they who do not observe it, should not despise them who observe it. “ Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind.” In both cases, if they are sincere, they will be accepted of the Lord. The grand matter is the cultivation of mutual love ; the mode of expressing it, unless it is distinctly proved, which, we apprehend, it has not, to have been fixed by apostolical authority for the church in all ages, is a matter of very inferior importance. It seems, like every external thing not essential, not expressly enjoined as a law to the churches, a thing of time and place, depending on the manners of the age or country, like the wearing, or the not wearing, long hair at Corinth. A kiss of charity is equivalent to a kiss not of mere form, but expressive of real Christian affection.^b But though the external *mode* of expressing Christian love be a matter comparatively unimportant, the importance of cherishing this affection, ay, and of expressing it too, cannot be exaggerated. “ The entertainment, and increase, and expression of Christian love is not optional, but obligatory ; the very stamp and badge of Jesus Christ upon his followers.” And the members of the same Christian church should especially cultivate mutual brotherly affection, and on all proper occasions manifest it, by readily and cordially recognising one another as brethren.

^b See note B.

IV. BENEDICTION.

It only remains now that we say a word or two on the parting benediction, "Peace be with you all that be in Christ Jesus. Amen." It is the all but uniform practice of the Apostles, both to begin and end their epistles with prayers and benedictions. Peter began his epistle with the prayer, "Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied;" and he ends with the prayer, "Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus." The Apostles exemplified their own precepts to pray always; to pray without ceasing. To pray for Christian brethren is one of the most natural modes of expressing Christian affection; as Christians are taught of God¹ to love one another, they are also taught of God to pray for one another.

"Peace" is a word expressive of whatever is necessary to happiness. Peace be to you, is just equivalent to, May you be happy. When the man is happy, the mind is tranquil. The unhappy man has a disturbed, unquiet, agitated mind. The import of the wish, "Peace be with you," depends on the views of the person who utters it. In the mouth of a well-informed Christian it means, May you have all the happiness which flows from possessing, and knowing that you possess, that favour of God which is life, that loving-kindness which is better than life; from the conscience being sprinkled with the blood of atonement; from the heart being renewed by the Holy Ghost; from the mind being fixed in the belief of the truth; from the faith of the exceeding great and precious promises; from the hope of the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory. May you "want no good thing." May you be "kept in perfect peace." May "the peace of God keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." May "the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means."² This prayer the Apostle presents

¹ Θεοδιδασκτοι.² Phil. iv. 7. 2 Thess. iii. 16.

for *all* the elect strangers, as being “in Christ Jesus,” so closely related to Christ Jesus as to be, as it were, identified with him, having fellowship with him in his death, his resurrection, his new life, his honours, his happiness; living in him, animated by his spirit, walking in him, sustained by his grace, imitating his example, regulated by his laws, his living images, his “epistles seen and read of all men.”

This is an expression of the love of a Christian man to Christian men, and is a wish that they may enjoy in abundance Christian happiness. It is they only who are in Christ Jesus that can enjoy the peace which the Apostle here invokes. There is no peace of this kind to them who are not in Christ Jesus. To all who are not in him there is condemnation: “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.” It is they who believe in Christ, and who are thus united to him, that can enter into peace. To quote once more the devout Archbishop, from whom I part with reluctance as from a pious accomplished friend, who has been my instructive and delightful companion during my leisurely journey through this most fertile region of the word of inspiration, and to whom I am much indebted for turning my attention to some of its more recondite beauties, and for gathering for me, and for you, some of its sweetest flowers and richest fruits: “They that are in Christ are the only children and heirs of true peace. Others may dream of it, and have a false peace for a time, and wicked men may wish it to themselves and to one another, but it is a most vain hope and thought; but to wish it to them who are in Christ Jesus hath good ground. All solid peace is founded on him, and flows from him.” All who are in Christ have peace. Being justified by faith, they have peace; but the Apostle’s prayer is, that their peace may be multiplied, preserved, increased; that their peace may be as a river, and their happiness as the waves of the sea; that they may grow in holy happiness till they become perfectly happy; because perfectly holy, having the peace of God; because having the purity of God, “peace, quietness, assurance for ever.”

The peculiar expression, "Peace be with you all who are in Christ Jesus," seems to intimate that there might be among them some who were not in Christ Jesus. It was so in the primitive age as well as now. All were not in Christ who bore his name. To those men continuing in that state, there is, there can be, no peace, no true peace. They may, they do, say, Peace, peace to themselves: but the Christian minister dares not say, Peace to them. He wishes, O how eagerly! their salvation; but he expects this only in the destruction of their false peace. His call to them is, "Let sinners in Zion be afraid;" and his prayer to God is, that he may disturb their peace, shake them with salutary terror, chase them out of all the refuges of lies in which they are so apt to seek and find shelter, and never allow them to be at peace till, "being justified by faith, they have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" never know what hope is, till they "have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in the gospel."

The Apostle concludes his benedictory prayer with the emphatic Hebrew word, *Amen*, expressive at once of desire and expectation. 'May it be so.' 'It shall be so.' He could not but wish it; for he loved them: and he could not but expect it; for it is one of those promises which "are all yea and amen in Christ Jesus to the glory of God by us." "The Lord will bless his people with peace."¹

And now, brethren, I have finished these Expository Discourses on this important and interesting part of Divine truth. It is more than sixteen years since I commenced them. Of those who witnessed their commencement, many are in another, not a few of them, I doubt not, in a better world. We must soon go to them in the grave. Oh! let us see that we shall also go to them in heaven. It is in a very high degree improbable that I shall ever deliver to you again so long a series of discourses; a solemn reflection both

¹ Psal. cxix. 11.

to me and to you. It says to me, "Make full proof of thy ministry;" it draws to a close; "work while it is called to-day; the night cometh when no man can work." "Prepare to meet thy God." "The Judge standeth before the door." Make up thy account; thou canst not long continue a steward. And to you it says, "To-day, if ye will hear my voice, harden not your hearts. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

My work in composing and delivering these discourses, and yours in listening to them, are over; but there remain the improvement which ought to be made, and the account which must be given. The first will, I trust, follow; the second certainly shall. It is by attending to the first that we will be prepared for the second. For this, as for all means of religious improvement, we must ere long give account. O that it may be given with joy, and not with grief! "The Lord grant" that both the teacher and the taught may, notwithstanding all that has been wanting and wrong in the manner in which they have performed their respective parts, "the Lord grant that we may find mercy of the Lord in that day."² Amen.

¹ 2 Tim. i. 18.

NOTE A.

“Explodatur figurata, admittatur literalis expositio.”—PEARSON de Succ. Rom. Episc.

“Babylona proprie accipio pro celebri illa Assyriæ urbe.”—BEZA.

“Cur Babylon in Italia potius, aut in Egypto quam in Mesopotamia, sit quærenda, causam non video.”—WETSTEIN.

“Multi ex veteribus Romam ænigmatische putarunt notari. Hoc commentum Papistæ libenter arripiunt, ut videatur Petrus Romanæ Ecclesiæ præfuisse. Neque enim deterret eos infamia nominis, modo sedis Apostolicæ titulum prætexere ipsis liceat; nec Christum magnopere curant, modo Petrus ipsis relinquatur. Quinetiam modo, retineant Cathedram Petri nomen, suam Romam in profundis inferis collocare non recusabunt. Atque vetus illud commentum nihil habet coloris.”—CALVIN.

NOTE B.

“Osculo sancto, osculo vero, osculo pacifico, osculo columbino, non subdolo, non polluto.”—BEDA. “Non adulatorio sicut Absolon osculabatur populum, non simulatorio sicut Joab Amasam, non proditorio sicut Judas Dominum, non impudica sicut mulier adultera juvenem, sed osculo sancto, quod est caritatis signum et ejus fomentum.”—LYRA.

“The fraternal kiss with which every one, after being baptized, was received into the community, by the Christians into whose immediate fellowship he entered—which the members bestowed on each other just before the celebration of the communion, and with which every Christian saluted his brother, though he never saw him before—was not an empty form, but the expression of Christian feelings; a token of the relation in which Christians conceived themselves to stand to each other. It was this indeed which, in a cold and selfish age, struck the Pagans with wonder: to behold men of different countries, ranks, stages of culture, so intimately bound together; to see the stranger who came into a city, and, by his letter of recognition (his ‘Epistola formata’), made himself known to the Christians of the place as a brother beyond suspicion, finding at once among them, to whom he was personally unknown, all manner of brotherly sympathy and protection.”—NEANDER. Gen. Hist. of the Christ. Relig. and the Church. TORRY’S Translation, vol. i. sect. iii. p. 347.

ADDITIONAL NOTE TO DISCOURSE XVI.

PART V. SEC. 1, VOL. II. P. 346.

“Christus dum in terris vixit paucos Judæos convertit: at post mortem et resurrectionem suam, per spiritum profectus prædicavit spiritibus qui erant in carcere, 1 Pet. iii. 19; id est gentibus qui sedebant in umbra mortis constrictæ compedibus, atque catenis tenebrarum et ignorantiae, easque imperio ac regimini suo subjecit.”—WOLZOGENTUS. Com. in Evang. Joan. ch. xiv. 12. Bib. Pol. Frat. tom. viii. p. 963.

“Quæstio quam mihi proposuisti ex Epistola Apostoli Petri solet nos, ut te latere non arbitror, vehementissime commovere, quomodo illa verba accipienda sunt, tanquam de inferis dicta. Replico ergo tibi eandem questionem, ut sive ipse potueris, sive aliquem qui possis inveneris, auferas de illa atque finias dubitationem meam. Multa millia hominum qui Deum ignorantes, et dæmonum vel simulachrorum cultui dediti a temporibus Noe usque ad passionem Christi, ex hac vita emigrarunt quos apud inferos Christus inveniens, quomodo illis non predicavit sed illis tantum qui in diebus Noe increduli fuerunt, cum fabricaretur arca? Aut si omnibus prædicavit cur illos solos Petrus commemoravit, pretermissa multitudo tam innumerabili cæterorum? Quinam isti (spiritus in carcere) sint temerarium est definire. Cur Petrus eos tantum commemorare voluerit quibus in carcere inclusis evangelium prædicatum est, qui in diebus Noe cum fabricaretur arca increduli fuerunt vides quam latebrosum sit—et quæ me moveant, ne affirmare hinc aliquid audeam. His dictis subnectit. ‘Propter hoc enim et mortuis Evangelizatum est,’ &c. Quem non moveat ista profunditas? . . . Considera tamen ne forte totum illud quod de conclusis in carcere spiritibus qui in diebus Noe non crediderant, Petrus Apostolus dicit, omnino ad inferos non pertineat, sed ad illa potius tempora, quorum formam ad hæc tempora transtulit. Illa quippe res gesta forma fuerat futurorum, ut ii qui modo non credunt Evangelio, dum in omnibus gentibus ædificatur ecclesia, illis intelligantur esse similes qui tunc non crediderunt cum fabricaretur

arca. Illi autem qui crediderunt et per baptismum salvi fiunt, illis comparentur qui tunc in eadem arca salvi facti sunt per aquam. Fieri potest ut mortuos dixerit infideles hoc est in anima mortuos. Proinde etiam quod sequitur ‘propter hoc et mortuis Evangelizatum est, ut judicentur quidem secundum homines in carne, vivant autem secundum Deum spiritu’ non cogit apud inferos intelligi. Propterea enim in hac vita, et mortuis, Evangelizatum est, id est, infidelibus et iniquis, ut cum crediderunt judicentur quidem secundum homines in carne; hoc est in diversis tribulationibus et in ipsa morte carnis. Hæc expositio verborum Petri cui displicet vel cui etiam si non displicet non tamen sufficit quærat ea secundum inferos intelligere: qui si valuerit illa quibus me moveri supra commemoravi ita solvere ut eorum auferat dubitationem impertiat et mihi.”—AUGUSTINI, Epistolæ. Ep. xcix. p. 500-511. 8vo. Ludg. 1561.

The article in τῷ πνεύματι, ch. iii. 18, according to the textus receptus, is rejected from the text by Wetstein, Griesbach, Matthæi, Scholz, and Lachmann. Bishop Middleton considers the true rendering of θανάτῳ θείας σαρκί, ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι, as “dead carnally, but alive spiritually.”—Doctrine of the Greek Article, p. 618.



THE SON OF MAN AND HIS GOING.

TWO SERMONS.

SERMON I.

THE SON OF MAN.

MATT. xxvi. 24. LUKE xxii. 22.—The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him,—goeth, as it was determined.

THE Son of Man. Who is HE? and what does this appellation mean? what is its reference, and what is its signification? And his going, What is IT? whence does he go? whither does he go? how does he go? These are the topics which the passages of Scripture now read naturally bring before the mind.

These were topics which, in the days of his flesh, deeply engaged the attention both of the enemies and the friends of our Lord Jesus. On a very interesting occasion, when, on certain Greeks seeking an interview with him—seeing in this event the handful of first-fruits of the fulfilment of the ancient oracles, “To Shiloh,” when come, “shall be the gathering of the people,” and “in Abraham’s seed shall all nations be blessed,”—he said, “The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified: now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out: and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to me;” the unbelieving Jews exclaimed, “Who is this Son of man?” Whom can he mean? Can he mean himself? And if he mean himself, What does he mean? And his going was as

much a mystery to them as his name. When he said to them, "I go my way; and ye shall seek me, and shall not find me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come. Then said the Jews, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go ye cannot come. What manner of saying is this?" They had indeed no wish to know the truth; and our Lord left them with those words of fearful augury. "When ye have lift up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am HE;" "the same that I said to you from the beginning." They *now* know who the Son of man is, and have found out where he has gone, and that "where he is, there they can never come."

The friends of our Lord, his chosen disciples, had no doubt who the Son of man was. It is very questionable how far, at this time, they understood the meaning of this appellation, but they were quite satisfied as to its reference. How could it be otherwise, after he had said to them, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am? Who say ye that I am?" and they had replied, by the mouth of Peter, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God."

But though they were quite clear as to who the Son of man was, they were very much in the dark with respect to his "going." The truth is, they had no wish that he should go at all. It is highly probable that their faith was that of their nation, who held, that the Messiah should come, and not go; they thought that they had read in the law, "that Christ abideth for ever." Their hopes were connected with his staying, not with his going. They trusted that this was He who should redeem Israel: and how is he to redeem Israel if he go away; for assuredly Israel is not yet redeemed? Whenever he talked about going, bewilderment filled their minds, and sorrow their hearts. They very imperfectly understood either the dignity of his person or the design of his mission. But he was more than all the world to them; the life of their life, their stay, their hope.

They had left all for him, and he was to them more than all they had left. They were very unwilling to part with him. What could they do without *him*? And then, there was something about the way in which he spoke of leaving them, which alarmed them; for though they seem to have flattered themselves that his words, when he spoke of suffering many things, being mocked by the chief priests, delivered to the Gentiles, crucified, and on the third day rising again, were figurative, and did not mean all they seemed to say; yet still they feared the mystery involved in his words was something terrible. When he told them that he must go to the Father; and that, in going to the Father, he would prepare a place, and return, and take them to himself, and added, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know:" Surely, after all I have said, you should know why, where, how, I am going; Philip, speaking, I doubt not, the sentiments of them all, replied, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" And afterwards, when he said to them, "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father; his disciples said among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me, and Because I go to the Father? What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith." They find new difficulty in every additional expression. Ah, they were not willing to confess to themselves all they knew; at any rate, all they surmised on the subject! They did not clearly "understand the sayings, and they were afraid to ask him."

It has been all explained to them long ago. The mystery has been made manifest. He has gone; and they, ere long, became persuaded, that it was expedient for them that he should go, even though they, for a season, should be left behind him. They are gone too; gone to him: they have seen him again; and their hearts rejoice, and their joy no man taketh from them: rejoicing, "with a joy unspeakable and full of glory," that he came, that he went, that he will

come again, bringing them with him to revisit this earth, once the scene of their sinful and his sinless sorrows, then to become the theatre of His and of their glory; and, after reclaiming that part of His body in theirs, which, even when the spirit was life through his righteousness, has been dead in consequence of sin, return at the head of the unnumbered millions of the fully redeemed "purchased possession," to enter into the palace of his Father and their Father, the great King, the Lord of hosts; "and there they shall abide."

We, my brethren, are free from the perplexities equally of the unbelieving Jews, and of the disciples as yet unbaptized with that Holy Ghost, whose mission was one of the blessed effects of that going, which they so dimly apprehended, so deeply deprecated. If he had not gone, the Comforter could not have come. But he has gone, and sent Him from the Father; and it is to Him that we owe our freedom from all indistinctness and uncertainty on the subjects which the text brings before our minds. We know well, I trust, both the reference and the meaning of the appellation, "The Son of man." We know whither he has gone, and we know the way. We know that by penal suffering, by unutterable mental agonies, and by a most violent dissolution of the constituent parts of his humanity, he has gone, his soul into the separate state, and his body to the grave; and that these constituent parts of his humanity having been reunited in a glorious resurrection, he has, by a triumphant ascension, gone into heaven, the heaven of heavens, and "sat down for ever on the right hand of the Majesty on high."

The religious ordinance we are met to observe is an emblematical representation of the going away of the Son of man, especially of some of the earlier stages of his wonderful journey from earth to heaven, through agony, and death, and burial; and the brief season we have to spend previously to our engaging in it can surely scarcely be more appropriately employed, than in meditating a little on the Son of man, on his

going, and on the manner of his going, as indicated in the text. He goeth, as it was determined. He goeth, as it is written.

And now, my friends, may your hearts indite a good matter, and may the tongue of the preacher be as the pen of a ready writer, when he speaks of the things which he has made, touching the Son of man, "the King," "the King's Son."

Nothing is more certain than that the appellation, the Son of man, belongs to Jesus Christ, and is peculiar to him. The prophet Ezekiel is, indeed, often addressed "son of man;" but neither he nor any one else, except Jesus Christ, is ever termed "*the* Son of man." In a passage already quoted, our Lord most expressly appropriates the appellation, "Who do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" The phrase occurs sixty-six times, if I mistake not, in the gospel histories, and in every case is used by our Lord himself. Indeed, the only instance in which it is employed by any one else is when Stephen, at his martyrdom, "looking up steadfastly to heaven," and beholding the Schekinah, or divine glory, and Jesus in the midst of it, exclaimed, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." The reason of these remarkable facts may probably come out in the course of our observations. It has been supposed, that in two cases in the Book of Revelation our Lord is termed the Son of man; but this is a mistake. The passages referred to are, chap. i. 12, and chap. xiv. 14. In both places the reference is to appearances of our Lord; but the expression is not "the Son of man," but it is "one like to the son of man," or rather "one like to a son of man"—that is, a person in human form. The expression in both cases is plainly a translation of Daniel's phrase, chap. vii. 13, where the reference is to the Messiah, but where the true rendering is, "one like a son of man," one in human form.

It has been often and confidently stated that the appellation, "the Son of man," was one of the names of the promised Messiah current among the Jews. Of this there is

no evidence—nay, there is evidence in the question of the Jews already referred to, “Who is this Son of man?” that no such usage existed.

That it is, however, a designation of our Lord in his official character, I think there can be no doubt. In John xii. 34, the appellations “the Christ” and “the Son of man” alternate; and in Luke xxii. 69, 70, “the Son of man” and “the Son of God;” and in Matt. xvi. 13, 16, and xx. 25, 31, “the Son of God,” “the Son of man,” and “the Christ.”

All the descriptive official appellations of our Lord, in the New Testament, are to be traced to the earlier revelation. “The Christ” of the evangelist and apostle, is “the Messiah” of David and of Daniel. “The word,” or *Logos*, of John, is “the wisdom” of Solomon. “The Son of God” is borrowed from the second and eighty-ninth Psalms; “He that should come,” from the hundred and eighteenth Psalm; and even the proper name “Jesus,” is but the Hebrew name “Jehoshua,” with a Greek termination, signifying “Jehovah shall save,” or “Jehovah the Saviour;” and thus synonymous with Isaiah’s “Immanuel,” “God with us.” It is a natural expectation, then, that the appellation “the Son of man,” like our Lord’s other titles, should have an Old Testament origin; and the expectation is not disappointed.

It has been common to seek this origin in that very remarkable oracle of the prophet Daniel, chapter vii. 9, 14: “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool; his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him; thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I saw in the night-visions, and behold one like the Son of man,” literally like a son of man, one in human form, “came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and

they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." There can be no reasonable doubt that this is a Messianic oracle, whether it refers to the union of the Divine and human nature in the person of the Messiah, or, as seems to me much more probable, his solemn investiture with universal dominion. But the expression, Son of man, is nor here his appellation. He is said to be "like the," or rather a "son of man," that is, the figure seen by the prophet in ecstatic vision wore the human form.

The true origin of the appellation is to be found, I apprehend, in the eightieth Psalm. It occurs in the seventeenth verse : "Let thy hand be upon the Man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself;" the same person who is spoken of under another of the figurative prophetic appellations of the Messiah at the fourteenth verse, as "the branch," which Jehovah had "made strong for himself." Such, I have no doubt, is the origin of the expression as a designation of the Messiah.

We have thus ascertained satisfactorily that the Son of man is a descriptive appellation of the Messiah, and traced its source in ancient prophecy. Let us now inquire into its meaning. What is the truth respecting the Messiah which it is intended to suggest to our mind ? The expression "Son of man" is just equivalent to man, or partaker of human nature, every man, but the first man, being a son of man. This is plain from the numerous passages where man and son of man are used as synonymous. "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent." "Man who is a worm, and the son of man who is but as a worm." "Thy wickedness may hurt a man, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man." "What is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him ?" "What is man that thou takest know-

ledge of him, or the son of man that thou makest account of him?" "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man who shall be made as grass?" "Blessed is the man that doth this, and the son of man that layeth hold of it." "No man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it." A son of man is just then a man, and the son of man, when used generally, is just man or mankind.

But when used in reference to an individual, the appellation, the Son of man, is obviously meant to do two things, to mark him as one of the human race, and to distinguish him from others, it may be from all others, of that race. To illustrate our meaning by a parallel case. Bible is the Greek word for book, with an English termination. When I call a book the bible, the book, I at once include it among books, and distinguish it from other books. It is a book, but it is the book of all books, the most important in its contents, the most certain in its statements, and among all books the only book of direct Divine origin. When the Messiah is termed "the Son of man," the term fixes the mind both on the reality of his manhood, and on the circumstances which distinguish him among men. It marks him as truly a man, a descendant of man: but it as really marks him as standing out from the rest of men. It fixes the mind both on what he has in common with all men, and what he is, and has, and does, which distinguishes him from all men. What these things are must be learned from the inspired account of the constitution of his person, the office with which he is invested, the work devolved on him, and the events of his wonderful history.

The leading thoughts suggested by the designation, the Son of man, as given to our Lord Jesus Christ, are these,—that he is a real man, truly a partaker of human nature; that he is a perfect man, the normal man, man as he should be; that he is the representative man, the second Adam, charged with the responsibilities of the race; that he is the God man, a true man in union with the true God; finally,

that he is the predicted man, the great subject of New Testament prophecy; a man, a son of man—the man, the son of man. Let us very shortly attend to these important truths, all folded up in the appellation, “the Son of man.”

This appellation intimates that our Lord was a real man. It expresses his true humanity. Led away by a false philosophy respecting the essential malignity of matter, and the incongruity, not to speak of the impossibility, of the union of what is so entirely evil with the holy spiritual existence who is the Christ, and bolstering up their system by misinterpretation of such scripture expressions as “the likeness of sinful flesh,” “found in fashion as a man,” some Christian teachers of an early age denied the reality of the incarnation, and held that what seemed to be the body of Jesus Christ was a phantasm, and his sufferings and death mere appearances. Such opinions prevailed very early in the Christian church, and it is to their supporters that the Apostle John seems to refer when he says, that “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God, but is that spirit of Antichrist.”

No doctrine, not even the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, is more plainly taught than that of the reality of his humanity. “The mediator between God and man is the man Christ Jesus,” “The word was made flesh.” When the Eternal life was manifested it was in flesh. The body he assumed was a true human body, possessed of the ordinary members, fit for the ordinary functions, liable to pain and fatigue, capable of death. And this body was animated, not by the Divine nature, or by some angelic or super-angelic spiritual essence, as its immediate principle of life and action, but by a human soul, having the common faculties of sense, and intellect, and choice, and affection, and action, which characterise the human race. He had flesh and bones as we have. And he had not only a body to grow in size and strength, but a mind to expand in capacity and to increase in attainment as

we have ; a heart to feel joy and sorrow, the bitterness of ingratitude, and the sweets of friendship. Nor is this all. He was not only really a man, but really the son of man. He was not a man created, but a man born. Though he had no human father, he was made of a woman. The Holy Ghost came on her, the most honoured and blessed among women, the power of the highest overshadowed her, and that which was conceived in her was of the Holy Ghost, and when the days were accomplished that she should be delivered, she brought him forth, her first-born son. Yes, "he was born of woman, and drew milk as sweet as charity from human breasts ; he thought, articulated, smiled and wept, and exercised all the functions of a man."

The possession of a real human nature appears to have been necessary to our Redeemer being an accomplished Saviour. How otherwise could he have made expiation for human guilt ? how could he have exercised sympathy for human sufferings ? how could he have been a pattern of human excellence ? Both the fact and its importance are strongly stated by the Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "Forasmuch as the children," the many children which he is to conduct to glory, as the Captain of Salvation, perfected by suffering, "are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he laid not hold on angels, but he laid hold of the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them who are tempted."

The very frequent, the all but exclusive use by the incarnate Son of God of a word so strongly marking his humanity, is a touching proof that, though "in the form of God," he did not boastfully display his equality with God, but

assuming the nature delighted in the name of man, and was "not ashamed to call us brethren."

But while the appellation, Son of man, marks our Lord as possessing, in common with men, all that is distinctive of human nature from angelic nature, or other natures, the appellation, *the* Son of man, as contrasted with a son of man, calls our attention even more strongly to what distinguishes him from other men. He is *the* Man, *the* Son of man. The term indicates that he is distinguished, that he stands out by himself, *the* Man among men, *the* Son of man among the sons of men, like the first king of Israel, "standing among the people, but higher than any of the people, from his shoulders and upward." How he is distinguished we learn from ancient prophecy and New Testament history.

(1.) He is the *perfect* man, man as he should be, the normal man. His mental constitution, both intellectually and morally, was just what it should be. Sense, intellect, affection, conscience, were all there in their right proportions, and in their due subordination. And his bodily constitution was fitted to its spiritual companion. Every element of innocent human nature was in him, none deficient, none in excess; so that, as in every case of other men there is either deficiency or excess, he was more a *man* than any other individual man ever was, and even in this way knew better than any man ever did, or could do, what is in man, and could sympathize with all in a degree no other man could do. And then in the whole exercise of his faculties, in all the feelings of his heart, in all his words, in all his actions, there was a perfect conformity to the mind and will of God. He always thought and felt as all men ought to think and feel. He always said just the right word, he always did just the right action, and both at the right time and in the right way. Never man spake as he spake; he did all things well. He was the true David, the man according to God's own heart, who did all his counsel. In this respect all his people resemble him, but none equal him; he stands alone; the Son of man, "all fair, no spot in him."

(2.) He is the Man, the Son of man, as he is the *representative* Man, the second Adam. He is the Goel, the kinsman-redeemer. The happiness of the race is in his hands. He bears their responsibilities. "The Lord has made to meet on him the iniquities of us all." When exaction for man's sin is made, he becomes answerable; when the great manifestation of displeasure against the sin of the race is to be given, the command is, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man of my right hand, the Son of man, whom I have made strong for myself, to do my will in, by the sacrifice of himself, taking away the sin of men." It was a fearful trial; and, had he failed or been discouraged, where had been the hope of man? Adam, the first representative, sinned; and all became sinners by his sin. The Son of man, the second representative, obeyed, fulfilled all righteousness, and all united to him are saved through his obedience with an everlasting salvation. In this respect he occupies the same relation to his brethren whom he is to bring to glory, as Adam did to the whole race whom he plunged into ruin; and here, too, he stands apart from all the race, and in strong contrast with the only man who ever stood on similar ground. There they stand: that the representative who sinned; this the representative who saves.

(3.) Still farther he is *the* Son of man, distinguished by a peculiarity of dignity different in kind from that which any man has ever enjoyed, or ever can enjoy. He is the *God man*, the Son of man, who is at the same time not merely a son of God, but *the* Son of God. He is "the word who was in the beginning, who was with God, who was God; by whom all things were made, without whom nothing was made that was made; in whom was the life, and the life in him was the light of men." He was this "word made flesh and dwelling among men." He was "God manifested in flesh." He and his Father were one. He was "the" visible "image of the invisible God;" so that he who saw him the Son of man, who was also the Son of God, saw the

Father. "This man," united to the eternal word, "was one with him who is one with the Father and Spirit," and without irreverence may we apply to him, the second Adam, what, with a very different meaning, was said of the first Adam, "Behold, the man is become as one of us!" He whom the Apostles saw with their eyes, and looked upon and handled with their hands, was "the word of life," the eternal life, which was with the Father manifested. To use the words of a great divine, "This son of man was the true Schekinah, the everlasting palace of the supreme majesty, wherein the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily, the most holy shrine of the Divinity, the orb of inaccessible light:" I add, the glorious effulgence of the Father of Lights, the substantial image of him of whom the whole created universe is but a dim shadow demonstrating that he is, by very indistinctly showing what he is. In this he is *the* son of man, the only man who ever was, ever can be, one with God. Here not only is there none of the sons of men his equal, but none of them his resemblance; as the God man, he is most emphatically *the* son of man, infinitely exalted above his fellows.

(4.) Finally, he is *the* Son of man, the *predicted* man and son of man, the great subject of Old Testament prophecy. There is a particular reference to this view of the significance of the terms in the passage before us, "The Son of man goeth, as it is written." There are many men, subjects of Old Testament prophecy; but there is one man who, under a great variety of names and descriptive designation, is the great subject of Old Testament prophecy. "To HIM all the prophets bear witness;" and not unfrequently is he spoken of as "a man," "the man," and, at any rate in one passage, as "the Son of man." When we call our Lord *the* Son of man, we mean he is *the* man of whom the spirit of prophecy is the testimony. This Son of man is the seed of the woman who was to bruise the head of the old serpent; the Son of *man* who was to destroy the works of the devil (the word not distinguishing the sexes,

but denoting the species). He is really what Eve seems to have thought she had obtained in her first son, "a man gotten from the Lord." This is the mysterious man who wrestled with Jacob till dawn of day; the angel of the covenant, who left him not till he had blessed him. This is the man who appeared to Joshua as the captain of the Lord's host. This is the man promised to David to sit on his throne for ever. This is the man of Jehovah's right hand, the man whom he made strong for himself. He is the child to be born, the son of the Virgin. This is he of whom it is said, "The Lord hath created a new thing on the earth; a woman shall compass a man." He is the man who was to be the peace of God's people, and great unto the ends of the earth. He is the man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs. He is the man who was fully to realize the meaning of the promise, "A man shall be a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." This is he of whom thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts by the prophet Zechariah, "Behold the man whose name is the Branch, and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." So much for the true import of the appellation, "The Son of man."

The reason why our Lord so frequently used this appellation instead of the first person, seems not only to have been that already hinted at, "the not being ashamed to call men his brethren," but also that that name, not being one of those understood by the Jews as belonging to the Messiah, the use of it enabled him to say much that for future purposes it was necessary to say, which, yet in language perfectly and universally perspicuous, could not have been said without interfering with other important purposes. In his assertion, that "the Father hath given the Son authority to

execute judgment because he is the Son of man," the appellation to be viewed in the last aspect we have considered, and the reason assigned is substantially this, because he is that person in human nature to whom, according to the prophets, the administration of judgment in the kingdom of God was to be intrusted.

The reason why none of the inspired writers use the appellation, may probably be, that while it was becoming in him to speak of himself in the lowliest of his titles, it better became them to speak of him under titles more directly indicative of dignity, superhuman dignity; such as, the Lord, the Christ, the Son of God. He might humble himself, but it became them to exalt him. The only exception, the case of Stephen, is accounted for by the visible human form in the midst of the Divine radiance, which struck the upturned eye of the martyr, entirely occupying his mind, and calling forth the appellation of our Lord most appropriate to it.

I had hoped to have been able to finish the illustration of the text in this discourse, but find I must postpone what I have to say, of the Son of man's going; going, as was determined; going, as was written, to some future occasion. You have been furnished with abundant materials for profitable meditation when at the table of the Lord. You have come here to-day, I trust, saying in your hearts, "We would see Jesus:" and we have attempted to introduce you to him. This is the Son of man, the Son of God, your brother, your Saviour. Behold the man! Look to Jesus. He has been set before you as the incarnate Divinity, your Lord and your God, yet bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh; as your representative and surety, who was wounded for your transgressions, bruised for your iniquities; who bore, and bore away your sins, whose blood cleanses you from all sin, and who, ever living to make intercession for you, is able to save you to the uttermost; as your great exemplar, the normal man, who has left you an example that you may walk in his steps, that you may be in the world as he was in the world; and,

finally, as He who is proved to be all this by the testimony of all the prophets.

And now, He who in the word has been set before you in these aspects, is in the same aspects to be set before you in the emblematical ordinance of the supper. Behold him ! Behold him ! Turn away from every thing else, and “ look to Jesus.” As you look to him, may you be lightened, and may your faces not be ashamed ! And while you present your unveiled minds as mirrors opposite to the representations made in the divinely inspired word, and divinely appointed emblems of the glory of God, in the face of Immanuel, may you be changed, by what is so glorious, into such a resemblance of it as your natures are capable of, and be made by his Spirit like him who delighted in calling himself the Son of man, and will never be satisfied till in truth, as well as in name, he has conformed you to himself as the Son of God ; he having for a season borne the image of the earthly Adam, that you might for ever bear the image of the heavenly Adam, the Son of God, the quickening spirit, the Lord from heaven. Amen.

EXHORTATION AFTER THE COMMUNION.

Christian brethren : The words which follow those on which we have been discoursing and meditating are interesting ones. Have you observed them ? “ Woe to that man by whom the Son of man shall be betrayed.” It was strange that any man should betray the Son of man, the best friend of the race ; stranger still, that the traitor should be one of his chosen attendants. Yet so it was. Judas, a peculiarly trusted disciple, was the author of the foul treachery. Under the guise of an act of friendship he betrayed him into the hands of his enemies, who mocked, and scourged, and crucified him. His crime was the foulest the sun had ever witnessed, and his plagues were wonderful. He became “ MAGOR-MISSABIB,” a terror to himself and to all around him. “ Wo,” wo was “ to that man, by whom

the Son of man was betrayed." Oh! who can tell the anguish which rent the heart of the miserable man, when, casting down the wages of iniquity, he exclaimed, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," and met with the cold taunt from his accomplices in the murder of the Son of man, "What is that to us? see thou to it." Oh! who can imagine the horror of thick darkness which enveloped his desolate soul, when in the dead of night he violated nature's first law, fearing that his sin could not be forgiven, feeling that his punishment could not be borne! His body lies at the foot of the precipice in mangled fragments. His soul is gone to its own place. "Good had it been for that man that he had never been born."

It is a fearful history, but full of warning and instruction; full of warning and instruction to us, to all, who by profession are the disciples of Christ; full of peculiarly appropriate instruction to us in the circumstances in which we are at present placed. Think you, Christian friends, that Jesus Christ ever sees so large a company of professed disciples sitting at his table, as he now sees, for he is indeed in the midst of us, without thinking, "Some of these will betray me?" "The hand of him that betrayeth me is on the table." Is not that what he is thinking now? And should not the thought that he so thinks, lead us to say, each for himself, "Lord, is it I?" When what he always thinks when many observe the Lord's Supper, was said by him when a few were met to observe the passover, none of the disciples, as good men are not suspicious of others, but jealous of themselves, thought of his brother. Every one feared for himself: All but the traitor, whom the consciousness of guilt kept for a season silent, till the fear of suspicion drew from his reluctant and trembling lips, what had already burst spontaneously from the hearts of his fellows, "Lord, is it I?" I suspect none of you. You, I dare say, suspect not one another; but let every man suspect himself, for there is a traitor to Christ in every heart.

We cannot, though we wished it, imitate to the letter the

conduct of Judas. Jesus is gone to the Father, and in the embraces of Almighty love is safe for ever from all the craft and power of all his enemies. False friend, open foe, can never hurt him more. He can never again be betrayed into the hands of his enemies ; but though his person cannot, his cause may : And it is in that form that we are in danger of becoming traitors to our Lord and King. He betrays Christ who, after professing Christianity, abandons its profession ; and he betrays him too, who assumes that profession, and, without abandoning it, disgraces it by acting inconsistently with it. The apostate is a traitor. He delivers up the cause of Christ, so far as it is in his hand, into the hands of sinners, to be mocked, and spit upon, and crucified. He says, like Judas,—This is it, take, hold it fast. I have made a trial of it, and found it wanting. Jesus is an impostor, and let him be treated accordingly. Open apostasy proclaims this ; silent apostasy implies it. This is “trampling under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant, by which alone there is sanctification, itself an unholy thing.” Wo, wo to the man who thus betrays the Son of man ! There is no other sacrifice for sin ; and for him who puts it away from him, there is nothing in the coming eternity but a certain fearful looking for of judgment to devour the adversaries.

But the apostate is not the only traitor. His crime comes nearer that of Judas, who, continuing to profess to regard Christianity as Divine, corrupts its doctrines and disregards its laws. The practically antinomian, worldly, inconsistent, wicked, professor of Christianity, hands over Christ’s cause to his enemies, to be misrepresented and abused. Instead of adorning the doctrine of their Divine Saviour, God their Saviour, they give occasion to blaspheme both Him and it. Wo, wo to the man who thus betrays the Son of man,—“betrays him with a kiss !” Even now the Lord indignantly asks him, “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, while ye do not the things I say to you ?” And oh ! how gladly would he at last hide himself, under the rocks

and mountains, from the withering look with which these words will be pronounced from the throne of universal judgment,—“Depart from me, I never knew thee, thou worker of iniquity!” God forbid that these woes should lie on you or on me, my brethren!

I doubt not that at present, with minds irradiated with the light of saving truth, and hearts warmed with the love of the Saviour, many of you feel as if it were utterly impossible that you should, in either of these ways, deny the Lord who bought you, that you should even act Peter’s part, far less Judas’. You cannot shrink too sensitively from the slightest approach to either; but one of the best preventives is a deep-seated conviction, a habitual feeling, that in you dwelleth no good thing; and that, apart from Christ, left to yourself, treachery to your Lord is not only possible, but certain. Keep close to Him, and you are safe; not otherwise. Beware of tampering with temptation; beware of self-confidence,—

“Beware of Peter’s word,
Nor confidently say—
I never will deny my Lord;
But grant I never may.”

“Watch and be sober,” “watch unto prayer;” “Satan desires to have you, that he may sift you as wheat.” The world in which you live is full of snares, and your most dangerous enemy is within, “the evil heart of unbelief.” “Keep the heart with all diligence,” and “watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.” Trust in the Saviour’s faithful promise, “I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and none can pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” Expect the fulfilment of this promise; but expect it only in hearing his voice, and following him as the good Shepherd. “Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at his revelation;” yet “fear lest such a promise of entering into his rest being left, any of you should seem to come short

of it." Oh! think, on the one hand, how many have seemed to run well, and yet have turned aside after Satan, gone back to perdition! Oh! think, on the other, how many, weak as you, have, strong in the strength that is in Christ Jesus, persevered in running the race set before them, till, reaching the goal, they obtained the prize of their high and holy calling, and are now casting at the feet of their Leader and Rewarder the unwithering garlands with which he has crowned them! Contemplate those who have made shipwreck of faith and hope, of happiness and heaven; and those who, with full spread sail, a rising tide, and favourable gale, have entered the fair, the safe haven. Let the open apostasies or secret withdrawals of false disciples awaken holy jealousy of yourselves, and produce more entire reliance on, more devoted obedience to, your Lord. Let their lukewarmness but increase your ardour, and their treachery confirm your allegiance, and make the reflections and the determinations of the Christian poet your own :—

“ When any turn from Zion’s way—
Alas! what numbers do!—
Methinks I hear my Saviour say,
‘ Wilt thou forsake me too?’

“ Ah! Lord! with such a heart as mine,
Unless thou hold me fast,
I feel I must, I shall decline,
And prove like them at last.

“ Yet thou alone hast power, I know,
To save a wretch like me:
To whom or whether should I go,
If I should turn from thee?

“ Beyond a doubt, I rest assured
Thou art the Christ of God,
Who hast eternal life secured
By promise and by blood.

“ The help of men and angels join’d
Could never reach my case;
Nor can I hope relief to find
But in thy boundless grace.

“ No voice but thine can give me rest,
And bid my fears depart ;
No love but thine can make me bless'd,
And satisfy my heart.

“ What anguish has that question stirr'd,—
‘ If I will also go ?’
Yet, Lord ! relying on thy word,
I humbly answer,—‘ No.’ ”

Stand by that resolution. Hold fast what you have received ; let no man take your crown. It is as certainly yours as if you had it, if you persevere. Faithful is he who has said it—not a man that he should lie ; though the Son of man, not such a son of man as changes his mind—“ Be faithful unto death, and I will give you a crown of life.” To Him and to his Father we commend the keeping of your souls. They are able, by their good Spirit, to “ keep you from falling, and to present you before the presence of their glory with exceeding joy.”

And now, “ O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our fathers ! God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ! keep this for ever in the imaginations of the thoughts of the heart of us thy people, and prepare our heart unto thee. Let thy hand be upon the Man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man, who thou madest strong for thyself ; so shall we not go back from thee : quicken us, and we shall call on thy name. Turn us again, O Lord of Hosts ! cause thy face to shine and we shall be saved.”

SERMON II.

THE GOING OF THE SON OF MAN.

MATT. xxvi. 24. LUKE xxii. 22.—The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him,—goeth, as it was determined.

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THE Son of man, and the going of the Son of man, these are the two subjects which the text offers to our consideration. In a discourse which I delivered to you four months ago, when I last presided among you in the observance of the Lord's Supper, I called your attention to the first of these topics. It is my intention to devote the present discourse to the illustration of the second.

On the occasion referred to, I showed you that, while 'Son of man' signifies neither more nor less than a partaker of human nature, by being a descendant of Adam, a born, not a created man, *the* Son of man is one of the distinctive appellations of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Saviour of mankind. I traced the origin of the appellation to an Old Testament oracle, and showed you how this designation turns the attention at once to the reality and the peculiarities of our Lord's humanity. While it includes him in the race of man, it distinguishes him from every other individual of that race. It marks him a real man; but it equally marks him as a singular man. It tells us he is no airy phantom, no incarnate angel: he is a very man; he is the man Christ

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Jesus; born of a woman, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; with a body capable of fatigue, and pain, and death; and with a mind to think, and a heart to feel, and a conscience to judge, and a will to choose, as we have; passing through the helplessness of childhood and the changes of youth, into the maturity of manhood; personally acquainted with the trials of humanity, and able to sympathize with its infirmities and sorrows. But while it marks him as a real man, it equally marks him as a singular man: as a perfect man, man as he should be, the normal man; in this respect all his people resemble him, but none of them equal him: as the representative man, the second Adam; in this respect there is but one man who can be compared to him, Adam, and he is his contrast, not his resemblance: as the God-man, the Word made flesh, God manifest in flesh; in this respect he has not only none equal, but none like to him; he stands alone, not only among men, but among creatures, ay, among existing beings: as the predicted man, the illustrious man, to whom all the prophets who have been since the world began bear testimony; here, too, he has the pre-eminence; for though other men are subjects of prophecy, he is the great subject of prophecy. The spirit of prophecy is, by way of eminence, HIS witness. It testifies of Him, and of every one else only as related to Him. This is the Son of man, so real, so singular a man, so like us, so unlike us, at once so entirely on our level and so immeasurably above us.

The predestined, predicted "going" of this Son of man comes now to be considered. "The Son of man," said the Son of man himself, goeth, "goeth as was determined, goeth as it is written." It was a common thing for him to speak both of his coming and his going. Heaven was his original abode—earth was his present residence; but it was not intended to be his permanent dwelling-place. He had come from heaven to earth, and was to go from earth to heaven. When he came, he came not unsent. He was commissioned to do a great work, and, when that work was accomplished,

he was to return to him that sent him. This is the going referred to in the text, sometimes called his "decease" or departure, sometimes his being "taken up," which was to be "accomplished at Jerusalem."

The time of his continuance on earth was now drawing to a close. "The Son of man goeth," is just about to go. In a very few days he would finish the work which the Father had given him to do, having glorified him on the earth. In a very few weeks he would be in his Father's house, on his Father's throne.

The journey that was before him, on which he was just about to enter, was a very wonderful one: it was first a journey down into the lowest depths of suffering and abasement, and then a journey up from these depths to the loftiest heights of dignity and happiness. The journey had, as it were, two great stages. He goes to the grave, the lowest spot he can reach on earth; and he goes to the throne of God, the highest spot he can reach in heaven. He goeth to severe suffering and violent death; he goeth to eternal life and to boundless enjoyment; and he goeth through this suffering and death to this life and enjoyment. The cross is the way to the crown. "The Son of man goeth."

Let us, led by the Spirit of inspiration, endeavour to accompany him in his wondrous journey; and when we have seen whither he has gone, and what was the way, we will be prepared for understanding the import of his words concerning this going, when he says, "He goeth, as it was determined; he goeth, as it is written."

When our Lord uttered the words of the text, he had finished his public ministry. He had for the last time, before his entering on the first stage of his mysterious journey, his journey to the house of silence, the low, lonely dwelling of the dead, assembled his disciples together to celebrate along with them, once more, the symbolical ordinance which, for so many ages, had foreshadowed his passion, and to institute another, which should be its commemoration till time shall be no more. To cure them of their ambition, he taught

them, by performing to them the menial office of washing their feet, that, like their Master, they should readily submit to the most degrading services, in order to promote the welfare of their fellow disciples, and even fellow men ; and that in his society the point of honour was not superior power, but superior usefulness, not the highest dignity, but the deepest humility ; intimating to them meanwhile, that very high spiritual honours would be enjoyed by them as princes and judges under him, over the twelve tribes of the spiritual Israel. Sitting at the passover table with them, with his loins girt, and his shoes on his feet and his staff in his hand, like one just about to go, to begin his journey, he intimated that one of them should betray him. "The hand," said he, "of him who betrayeth me, is at the table. The Son of man goeth as it is written, goeth as it was determined ; but wo to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed." Having given the beloved disciple the means of ascertaining who he referred to, and having intimated to the miserable man himself that he was aware of his treachery, he dismissed him, without apparently making any disclosure to the rest of the disciples. He then proceeded to say to his chosen, faithful few, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you ; ye shall seek me ; and as I said to the Jews, now I say unto you, Whither I go ye cannot come." "Lord," said Simon Peter, with characteristic forwardness, "whither goest thou ?" Jesus answered him, "Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards." He then instituted that solemn religious observance, in which, after more than eighteen centuries, we are come together to-day to engage, intimating that he and they were just about to part, and that most important events would take place ere they should meet again. "Verily, I say unto you, I shall no more drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, till I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father, God." "I go," he said to them, for he saw sorrow had filled their hearts, "I go to my Father's house, in which are many mansions, to prepare a place for you ; and

I will come again, and take you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also; and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

After offering them such instruction and consolation as they needed, and were able to bear, like one who, though feeling at parting with friends, yet having an important journey before him which he is determined to prosecute, is impatient to commence it, he said to them, "That the world may know that I love the Father, and so do as the Father hath given me commandment, Arise, let us go hence." The hour was come, and he shows himself ready to go; he permits them to accompany him a part, a little part, of his way, though the darkest and dreariest portion of the journey he must go alone. Of the people there can none be with him.

Having given a few additional exhortations, and offered up that most wonderful prayer recorded in the 17th chapter of the gospel of John, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Kedron, to a garden in the Mount of Olives, where he and they had been wont to resort. He warned them of the hazard of their being offended, stumbled, at some of the dark steps of his departing journey during that night of trial; and coming to a place whose name is embalmed in all Christian hearts, in all countries and ages, Gethsemane, he requested eight of the disciples to remain near the entrance, while he, taking with him his three personal friends to be witnesses of the strange transaction that was to take place, retired into the depths of the orchard to watch and pray, and fight with potent but invisible foes. "Now was the power of darkness. Now the prince of this world came to him." Untouched by mortal hand, "he began to be sorrowful, sore amazed, and very heavy," and said to his three friends, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me. Pray that ye enter not into temptation." And going forward a little, about a stone-cast, he kneeled down, and fell on his face on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, that hour, that is, the extreme inward suffering of that hour, might pass from him.

“Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee. O, my Father, if it be possible, take away this cup; let it pass from me; nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.” He returned and found his three disciples sleeping, worn out with fatigue and sorrow. “Could ye not,” said he, “watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak.” Again he retired, and prostrated himself, and, “with strong crying and tears,” presented the same supplication. Returning again, he again found them asleep; and again he retired, and prostrated himself, and with unabated intenseness of desire presented a third time the same prayer, and, “being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as great drops of blood falling to the ground.” The struggle is over; the prayer is heard. The prince of this world retires, finding that he has nothing in him. The cup—*that* cup—of agony, which threatened to dissolve the bands of life, passes from him, and “an angel appears to him, strengthening him.”

Coming to his disciples, he speaks to them as one bent, with unchanged resolution and undaunted courage, on prosecuting his journey, notwithstanding the fearful storm he had met in its commencement. “The hour,” said he, “is at hand when the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; behold he is at hand that doth betray me.” And there, indeed, was the treacherous disciple, followed at a little distance by a band of soldiers and other attendants, with lanterns, and torches, and weapons. According to a preconcerted plan, the traitor, by a salute, gave intimation to the officers of the law whom they were to apprehend. Instead of attempting to escape, having meekly rebuked Judas for his foul treason, “Friend, wherefore art thou come? Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” he undauntedly walked up to the armed band, and by miraculously making them go backward, and fall to the ground, rendering it evident that he needed no legions of angels to protect him, and that no created power could make

him an unwilling prisoner, he surrendered himself into their hands, submitting to be bound by them, having requested that his disciples might be allowed to go away. Hopeless it would seem now in reference to him, and terrified for themselves, the disciples now all forsook him and fled.

He must now prosecute his journey alone ; and, single-handed, struggle with the difficulties of the weighty enterprise of a world's redemption. Lovers and friends have been parted from him. But he does not fail, nor is he discouraged. Having exercised his miraculous power in healing a wound inflicted by a rash disciple on one of Judas' band, he proceeded under their guidance, offering no resistance, to the assembled Sanhedrim of the Jews,—a lamb in the midst of wolves. There questioned by the high priest of his doctrine, He appealed to the unnumbered multitudes who had heard him, as the proper witnesses in such a case ; and when contumeliously struck in the face by an officer of the court for making so reasonable a suggestion, meekly replied, " If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil ; but if well, why smitest thou ? " After ineffectual attempts to obtain any thing like legal proof, they determined to oblige him to become evidence against his own life. The high priest solemnly abjured him (the Jewish mode of administering an oath), by the living God, to say whether he was the Christ, the Son of the living God ? " He confessed, and denied not, but confessed " the truth, though well aware of the purpose for which the question was put, and the consequence which would result from the answer. " Thou hast said it. I am. Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven." With ill-concealed exultation the high priest rent his clothes, pronounced him guilty of blasphemy, and his assessors with one voice condemned him as worthy of death. During this mock trial, his disciple, who had been most frequent and fervent in his expressions of attachment to him, panic-struck, probably under his eye, within his hearing, certainly to his

intimate knowledge, again and again, and again with oaths and execrations, denied that he knew him. And no sooner was the sentence of condemnation pronounced than every species of vulgar insult was heaped on him. They mocked him, and spat in his face, and buffeted and smote him. They blindfolded and struck him on the face with the palm of their hands, and, in inhuman sport, asked him, saying, "Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is it that smote thee?"

Morning was now come. The Sanhedrim withdrew, and held a secret council; the result of which was, that they should use every means to have the sentence of death carried into execution. In a body they proceeded with their bound victim to the residence of the Roman governor, and demanded due punishment to be inflicted on him as a convicted criminal of the deepest dye. Finding that, much disposed as the pusillanimous Roman magistrate was to ingratiate himself with the Jewish rulers and people, he was not inclined to order a man to execution merely because they said he was a malefactor, they brought against Jesus the false accusation of sedition and rebellion against the Roman government. "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cesar, saying, That he himself is Christ, a king." To these accusations Jesus, to the amazement of Pilate, made no reply, as if indisposed to interfere with the current of events which was carrying him along his appointed course. On being solemnly questioned as to the regal character which, it was said, he had assumed, he replied, "I am a king. My kingdom is not of this world. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I unto the world, that I should bear witness of the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Fully satisfied, from the utter failure of the Jews to produce evidence of their charge, as well as from his conversation with Jesus, that he was no aspirant after worldly dominion, that his designs in no degree hazarded the peace of the Roman empire or the security of Cesar's throne,

Pilate declared that he saw no fault in him requiring capital punishment.

On the Jewish rulers insisting on their unsupported charge, and mentioning Galilee as one of the chief theatres of Jesus' seditious machinations, Pilate gladly handed over the case to the tetrarch Herod, within whose jurisdiction Galilee was, and who, in consequence of the feast of the Passover, happened at that time to be in Jerusalem. To that unprincipled, licentious prince he was then conducted, and the chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused him. To Herod's impertinent questionings (for it is plain that he had hoped to have his curiosity gratified by the great Nazarene miracle-worker performing some wonder in his presence), and to their malignant pleadings, he equally gave no reply. Irritated at his disappointment, the Galilean prince, with almost inconceivable meanness, joined with his men of war in setting at nought his helpless, accused, but unconvicted subject, who had peculiar claims on his protection; and mocking him, and arraying him in a gorgeous robe, sent him back again to Pilate.

On his return Pilate summoned the Sanhedrim into his presence, stated to them that neither he nor Herod had been able to find any evidence of the civil crime with which they had charged Jesus, and that he had come to the resolution to discharge him, though, to gratify them apparently, he with most unprincipled inconsistency declared that he was ready to order him to be scourged—a punishment at once highly disgraceful and very painful; and most preposterously in their obvious temper attempted to induce them to accept of the release of the very person for whose condemnation they had made a special request, as the accustomed boon the Roman government had been in the habit of giving the Jewish people at their great annual religious festival. This inconsiderate proposal roused their antipathy to madness, and they demanded the release of Barabbas, a robber and a murderer; while the universal cry of the populace, led by their rulers, with respect to Jesus, was, “To the cross with him,

to the cross with him ; crucify him, crucify him." In vain did the weak-minded, unprincipled Roman magistrate exclaim, " What evil has he done ? " The louder was the sanguinary outcry, " To the cross, to the cross." Humanity, justice, law, decency, were all sacrificed to persevering, clamorous malignity, by unprincipled imbecility and mean selfish love of popularity. Their voices prevailed, and sentence was given forth that he should be crucified. According to the Roman usage, scourging uniformly preceded crucifixion. This punishment was inflicted with its usual severity ; and, in addition, the soldiery stripped him of his garments, clothed him in robes of mock royalty, crowned him with a garland of thorns, put a reed in his hand as a sceptre ; and, while they insultingly offered him pretended homage, they most cruelly smote him on the thorn-surrounded head with their hands and with the reed.

The conscience of Pilate, stirred by an alarming message from his wife respecting a dream concerning " this just man," whom he was so unworthily giving up into the hands of his enemies, induced him to make one last effort to save his life. Believing probably that when they saw the miserable circumstances to which the object of their dislike was reduced, they might think he had suffered enough, he brought forth Jesus, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robes, with a countenance pale with exhaustion and besmeared with blood, and said to the multitude, " Behold the man." A horrid shout immediately rose, " Crucify him ; crucify him." " Take *ye* him, and crucify him," said the wretched, contemptible magistrate ; " for *I* find no fault in him." The Jews then asserted that he deserved to die, according to *their* law, for claiming Divine sonship. This intimation but increased the terrors of the heathen judge, in whom, like many of his rank of that time, there seems to have been a strong mixture of scepticism and superstition. In serious alarm he turned to Jesus, and exclaimed, " *Who art thou ?*" But the mysterious man made no reply. " Speakest thou not to me ? " said the irritated and terrified

man of office. "Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?" The calm reply, "Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it was given thee from above," was little fitted to still the agitation and terrors of the judge's heart, and rendered him even more desirous than ever to save his life.

But in vain. The Jews were staunch murderers, steady to their purpose, and they knew the man they had to deal with. "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cesar's friend." This determined the question in Pilate's mind, and he was now prepared to do what he knew to be injustice, what he felt to be inhumanity, what he feared might be impiety, to avoid the hazard of being even falsely accused of being deficient in a due regard for the honour and rights of his master's imperial crown. Once more, however, he attempted to move their pity; again he presented him to them, saying, "Behold your king;" but he was met with a storm of indignant refusal. "Away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him." "Shall I crucify your king?" said he sarcastically. With a hearty response, which showed that, in their hatred of Jesus, they had for the time sunk even their nationality of feeling, stronger in them than in any Gentile nation, the chief priests answered, "We have no king but Cesar."

Seeking for some excuse or palliation for doing what he knew to be wrong, Pilate attempted to appease his conscience by washing his hands publicly, and declaring himself free of this innocent man's blood, whose unjust sentence he had already pronounced, and was determined to execute. "His blood," cried the infuriated crowd, "be on us and our children;" and Pilate, willing to content the people, gave sentence that it should be as they required. The robber and murderer was released, and the Holy One and the just, after being scourged, was delivered to their will to be crucified.

And now again they meanly and barbarously mock and abuse him, and taking off the robes of mock royalty, and putting on his own raiment, they lead him away, with two

malefactors condemned to the cross, to Calvary, to crucify him. Bending under the weight of the^r upper part of his cross, while one of his disciples is compelled to bear the hinder part of it after him, he passes along the streets of the Holy City, surrounded by an infuriated mob, who rejoiced in his sufferings, followed by not a few, especially of his female disciples, bewailing and lamenting him. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me," said the Divine sufferer with superhuman magnanimity; "weep for yourselves and for your children." Arrived at the place of execution, they give him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall. They then nailed him and his fellow-sufferers to their crosses, and set the crosses upright in the earth, placing that of Jesus in the midst, as if he had been the greatest malefactor of the three. No complaint is heard from him of their cruelty, but a prayer comes forth from the middle cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Having finished their horrid work, the Roman soldiers, who were their executioners, divided his garments among them, and disposed by lot of the seamless tunic which he had been accustomed to wear. The malignity of his enemies seemed to burn as fiercely as ever. The people passing by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. And the priests, with deeper hatred and profaneness still, derided him, mocking among themselves, with the scribes and elders, and saying in a parody of scripture, "He saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be Christ, the chosen of God, the Lord of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, that we may see, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him *now*, if he will have him." The soldiers also mocked him, coming to him and offering him vinegar, and saying "If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself." Even the malefactors who were crucified, joined in the all but universal expression of malignant scorn.

But a strange change came over the mind of one of these malefactors. While he hung by Jesus' side, virtue came out of him. His meek, pious, heroic suffering, connected it may be with what he had previously heard and seen of him, accompanied with the inward working of the good Spirit, convinced him that that crucified man was indeed the promised Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. He reproved the blasphemies of his companion, and humbly besought Jesus to think of him in pity when he entered on his reign, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Oh! who can apprehend the infinity of majesty and mercy in the reply, "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

For three hours of mortal agony, every moment enduring more than the pangs of an ordinary painful death, did Jesus hang on the cross. Near the foot of it he recognised his mother, and his dearest earthly friend. To her, the most blessed among women, whose heart now was struck through with the sword of which Simeon spoke, he said, looking to John, "Behold thy son!" he will take care of thee when I am gone; and to him he gave the highest proof of his confidence, by committing to his care the dearest of all his human relations. "Behold," said he, "thy mother! Be to her in my stead."

But what was going on within amid all this outward suffering? Ah! the iron had entered into the soul. All these external evils are but types, emblems of bitterer inward woes. The sufferings of his soul was the soul of his sufferings. Of the travail of his soul we are enabled to form some idea from the bitter cry which at the ninth hour was heard from the patient, magnanimous sufferer, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" This was the climax of his sufferings. "I thirst," said he; and having received the vinegar, held up to him on a sponge attached to a reed, he exclaimed, "It is finished!"

The agony is past. The expiation of human guilt is completed. It can no longer please Jehovah to bruise him. The face of God again shines benignantly on him. He

committed his parting spirit to his Father, well pleased for his righteousness' sake. He cried with a loud voice, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and, having said this, he bowed his head and gave up the ghost."

Heaven and earth attested the importance of the event. The sun was darkened; the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom; the earth quaked, the rocks rent, and the graves were opened; while those tacit testimonies found voice and expression in the words of the Roman centurion, "Truly this was a righteous man; truly this was the Son of God."

On the soldiers proceeding to that strange mixture of barbarity and mercy, the breaking the limbs of the crucified to hasten death, they found that Jesus was already dead; and the absolute certainty of his death was proved by an effusion of blood and water which followed the piercing of his side by a spear. On learning that he had expired, one of his wealthy followers, who, it would seem, never had courage to avow his faith in him during his lifetime, went, now that he hung a dishonoured corpse on a cross, boldly to the Roman governor, requesting liberty to perform the last offices of respect to his body; and having obtained this, took down the body of Jesus from the cross, and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, being joined by another wealthy but secret disciple; and having wound it with spices and linen clothes, as the manner of the Jews was to bury, they laid it, with a mixed sentiment of doubt and faith, with profound respect and deep sorrow, in Joseph of Arimathea's garden, in his own new tomb, hewn in stone out of the rock, wherein never man had yet been laid. And now the Son of man has reached the end of the first stage in his journey home. All this took place within little more than twenty-four hours from the time to which our text refers, and was all present to the Saviour's mind when he said, "Truly, the Son of man goeth."

Before proceeding farther in tracing the Son of man's amazing journey, it may be well for us here to stop and in-

quire how, when he went thus to the grave, he went *as it is written*? It was written that he should go, and he went “as it was written.” Here, there are three remarks which deserve our attention; (1.) He went in the character in which it was written he should go; (2.) He went in the disposition in which it was written he should go; and (3) in many of the particular and even minute details of his progress, he went as it was written.

(1.) He suffered and died as a public person, the representative of his people, the victim of sin. He laid down his life for the sheep. He gave himself a ransom for many. He suffered for us, the just in the room of the unjust; and this is as it was written. What says David? “I restored that which I took not away.” What says Isaiah? “He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was on him. The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all. Exaction was made, and he became answerable. He made his soul an offering for sin; he poured out his soul to death; he bare the sin of many.” What says Daniel? “Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.”

(2.) He went, as we have seen, in the spirit of the most entire self-devotedness, cheerful resignation, magnanimous fortitude. No man took his life from him; he laid it down of himself. And all this was written of him. What says David? “Lo, I come; to do thy will I take delight; yea, thy law is within my heart.” What says Isaiah? “I was not rebellious, neither turned away back; I have set my face as a flint. He shall not fail nor be discouraged. He was oppressed and afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.”

(3.) The agony in Gethsemane was as it was written: “Save me, O God! for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary with my crying; my throat is dried. O God! in

the multitude of thy mercy, hear me; in the truth of thy salvation, deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink; let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth on me. Hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily."

His betrayal by a false disciple was as it was written: "Yea," said David in the person of Messiah, "mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." "They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver," says Zechariah: "and the Lord said, Cast it to the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them."

The manner in which his death was accomplished, by injustice under the colour of law, was as it was written: "By oppression and by judgment, that is, by an oppressive judgment, was he taken off" (for this is admitted to be the true rendering of the passage); "He was taken from prison and from judgment."

Many of the particular insults and injuries done him were as it is written: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them who plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting. I am a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, they say, He trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he trusted in him. The abjects gathered themselves against me; they did tear me, and ceased not; with hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed on me with their teeth. They pierced my hands and my feet. He was numbered with the transgressors. They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots."

The preservation of his body from the breaking of the limbs, and the piercing of his side, were equally as it was written: "Many were the afflictions of the righteous One;

but the Lord delivereth him out of them all : he keepeth all his bones ; not one of them is broken. They shall look upon me whom they have pierced."

In fine, the remarkable circumstances of his funeral were as it is written : " He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death ;" or rather, " His grave was given," appointed to be " with the malefactors " along with whom he was executed ; " but he was with the rich while in the state of the dead." Thus did Christ die for our sins, and thus was he buried according to the Scriptures.

Thus far it is plain, then, he went as it was written. Many of those things were done in ignorance by the Jews and their rulers ; but by their means, " those things which God before had showed by the mouths of all his prophets, he so fulfilled."

And as he went " as it is written," so he went " as it was determined ;" for, had it not been determined, how could it have been written ? Fulfilled prophecy is the most striking proof of Divine ordination. All was the result of God's purpose, and infinite wisdom and mercy, purposed in himself before the world was. And " when Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together against God's holy child Jesus," it was, though most unconsciously, but " to do whatsoever God's hand and counsel had beforetime determined to be done." So much for the Son of man going to the grave in his way to his Father ; going as it is written.

The few words we have to say respecting the second stage of his journey, from the grave in Joseph's garden to the throne of God in the highest heavens, must be deferred till, in the ordinance of the Supper, we have religiously commemorated the events which we have been surveying.

And while we do this, let us think what must have been our path in leaving the world, if he had not trod the path we have been tracing. Ah ! our path would have led us deeper than into the grave : it would have led us down into the depths of endless perdition. Had he not borne our sins,

and borne them away, we must have borne them ; and their weight would have pressed us down into the nethermost hell. And in consequence of his thus going, where do we, if we are his, on good grounds hope to go ? For here we cannot stay ; we must go. Where do we hope to go ? To a safe, unstinged death ; our bodies to a peaceful, perfumed, hopeful grave ; our spirits to paradise, to be with Him there, till he come the second time, bringing us with him, to complete our salvation in the adoption, the redemption of the body.

And while we thus think, feeling how infinite are our obligations to Him, let us bless Him who came and who went, and who will come again, in the name of the Lord, to save us ; and let all that is within us be stirred up to magnify his name,—a name that is, as it ought to be, above every name. “Unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, even his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

* * * *

“The Son of man goeth ; goeth, as it is written ; goeth, as it was determined.” We have accompanied him to the cross and the grave ; but that is not the end of his journey. He is going to the house of his Father ; and though that lowly, lonesome, loathsome dwelling, is the house our father’s sin had prepared for *us* as our long home, it is not the house which the love of his Father has prepared for him. No : it was not possible *He* should continue long there. Mortality could not long hold that body which was in personal union with Him who alone hath immortality. It was to mark distinctly that his work was finished, fully finished, that he went there. That end had been gained, and on the morning of the third day he commenced his wondrous journey from the lowest spot in earth to the highest place in heaven.

“The God of peace,” the pacified divinity, “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of

the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant." "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door of the Son of man's sepulchre, and sat on it. His countenance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." And who is this that cometh forth from the tomb, glorious in his appearance, walking in the greatness of his strength? It is the Son of man. He has risen a conqueror from the grave; he returns with blessings from the world of spirits; he brings salvation to the sons of men. Never did the returning sun usher in a day like this. It is the jubilee of the universe. The morning stars are singing together, and all the sons of God are shouting for joy. "Glory to God in the highest: on earth, peace; good-will to men." And the Father of mercies is looking down with infinite complacency on his beloved Son, who has magnified his law and made it honourable, and secured the reign of grace, through righteousness, unto the eternal life of millions of otherwise hopelessly lost immortals.

But he has as yet only returned to the world of mortal life. Here he is not to remain. Still it is the Son of man goeth; "goeth, as it is written; goeth, as it was determined." For forty days he continued on earth, to give many infallible proofs of the reality of his resurrection, and to give the necessary commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen, speaking to them of the things that pertained to the kingdom of God. And now his work is done, and it is meet that he enter on his full reward; expedient, too, for his people, that the Comforter may come to them, who cannot come, till he, seated on his throne, send Him. So on a day, never to be forgotten on earth or in heaven, having discoursed to the disciples, whom having loved in the world he loved to the end, of the fulfilment in him of all things written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets concerning him, and having opened their understandings to understand the Scriptures,

and commanded them to preach repentance and remission of sins in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem, and promised to send them the promise of the Father, and enjoined them to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high ; “ he led them out as far as Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them ; and it came to pass, that while he blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven.” While the disciples, awestruck, were worshipping their ascending Lord, a cloud received him out of their sight, and two angels, like men in white apparel, recalled them to the real circumstances of their situation, by saying, “ Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye here gazing up to heaven ? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Of what took place within the veil, beyond these visible heavens in the heaven of heavens, we cannot now speak particularly. No doubt the whole celestial city was moved at his coming, and a meet reception was given by the King the Lord of Hosts, and all his loyal subjects, to Him who is the King, and the King’s Son, returning more than a conqueror from this fearful conflict with sin, and death, and hell. A name is given him above every name. He sits down on his Father’s throne at his right hand, angels, and authorities, and powers, are made subject to him, and most gladly is the command obeyed, “ Let all the angels of God worship him.”

Thus has the Son of man gone forth from the grave to the crown, from the grave to the throne ; thus has He, through suffering and degradation, entered into glory and happiness. Thus has he gone to the Father.

And in thus going, he went as it is written, as it was determined. For these are the recorded oracles of God, which are but revelations of his eternal decrees :—“ Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life ; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.” “ God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with

the sound of a trumpet : Sing praises to God, sing praises ; sing praises unto our King, sing praises." "Thou hast ascended on high ; thou hast led captivity captive ; thou hast received gifts for men." "The King shall joy in thy strength, O Lord ; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice ! Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. For thou preventest him with the blessings of thy goodness : thou hast set a crown of pure gold on his head. He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. His glory is great in thy salvation : honour and majesty hast thou laid on him. For thou hast made him most blessed for ever : thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance." "I saw in the night-visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Such is the prediction, such the decree of God ; and thus does it appear, then, in the second, as well as in the first, stage of his journey, "the Son of man goeth as it is written, goeth as it was determined."

Brethren, the Son of man, who came from heaven to earth, and is gone from earth to heaven, will once again come from heaven to earth. We observe the Lord's Supper till he comes, "looking for our Lord from heaven." When he comes, he comes not to continue on earth, but to gather together all his elect ones, and take them with him, soul and body, to the heaven of heavens, to live and reign with him for ever and ever. Such is the blessed hope he has connected with his glorious appearance. Cherish this hope, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling ; cherish this hope, and live under its influence. He is gone, and you must go. You would not wish surely to stay always in a world from which he has departed. When you go, whom-

ever, whatever you go from, you go to him ; and is not to depart when it is to be with Christ far better ? Live habitually under the influence of the hope of going to be with him in spirit when you die ; going to be with him in body and spirit when you rise again. He has prepared a place for you ; he is preparing you for that place ; and he will come again and take you to himself, that where he is there ye may be also. Whither ye go ye know, and the way ye know. Wonder not if some part of the way should be dark and dreary, rugged and thorny ; think of the way in which he went, and humbly, hopefully tread in his footsteps, even when they are marked with blood. He will not leave your redeemed souls in the separate state ; he will not permit your sanctified bodies for ever to be the prey of corruption. He that should come will come, and take all his people home to his Father's house ; presenting them, every one of them, the whole of every one of them—soul, body, and spirit—to Him, a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. He will by and by show you, as his Father showed him, the path of life, and in his light you shall see light clearly. Oh, while we look for such things, what manner of persons should we be in all holy conversation and godliness ! Surely, we should be “steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, inasmuch as we know our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.” And “now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope, through grace comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.”

**THE DUTY OF KEEPING OURSELVES
IN THE LOVE OF GOD,
AND THE MEANS OF PERFORMING IT.**

FOUR SERMONS.

SERMON I.

ON KEEPING OURSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD.

JUDE 20, 21.—But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

“THE perfecting of the saints,” “the edification of the body of Christ,” is the great design of that precious gift of the risen and ascended Saviour, ‘the Christian ministry,’ in all its forms, extraordinary or ordinary, temporary or perpetual. Those in whom that gift was first embodied, the Apostles, steadily prosecuted this design. Next to the glory of their Lord, and as the grand means of promoting that glory, the object of their intense desire and constant endeavour was the perfection in holiness and comfort of his chosen people. They did and endured all that they did and endured, “for the elect’s sake, that they might obtain the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory.” Every thing in their writings bears on this great object,—that the “chosen, called, separated, peculiar people,” might enjoy Christian privilege, and possess Christian character, and discharge Christian duty, in the highest degree possible in the present state, as a preparation for that state of perfect happiness and perfect holiness on which they are soon to enter. Their statements, arguments, precepts, persuasions, warnings, encouragements, and consolations, were all obviously intended, and are all

obviously fitted, to gain this end,—that “the church purchased by the blood of Christ,” in every one of its members, might be “complete in Christ, perfect and entire, wanting nothing; filled with all knowledge and spiritual understanding, even with the riches of the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ: that they might not be like children, tossed too and fro with every wind of doctrine, but rooted and grounded in love, stablished, strengthened, settled: that they might not be babes who require milk, but strong men who can digest strong meat; not unskilful in the word of righteousness, but having their senses exercised to make a distinction between truth and falsehood, good and evil: that they might be filled with all joy and peace in believing, having abundant consolation and good hope: that they might be sanctified wholly in the whole man, soul, body, and spirit, becoming partakers of the Divine nature, and escaping the corruptions that are in the world: that they might be perfect men in Christ Jesus, having attained to the measure of the stature of his fulness: that they might be filled with the fruits of righteousness: that they might be strong, and overcome the wicked one: and that, walking worthy of him who had called them to his kingdom and glory, they might be preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and be found of him then in peace.”

This object is never lost sight of by the Apostles, no, not for a moment, even when led into statements which seem to have no direct bearing on it. The character and the doom of the ungodly are sometimes necessarily introduced in their writings; but it is interesting to observe how quickly they dispatch such subjects, and how readily they find their way back to their favourite themes, Christian character, and Christian privilege, and Christian duty; and how ingeniously, we should have said—did we not recollect that they wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost—they render even such statements subservient to their great object. The transitions by which they pass from the one

subject to the other are often very striking. For example, in the second Epistle of the Apostle Paul to Timothy (iii. 13, 14), he is led to remark, that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived;” but he immediately adds, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.” And in his first Epistle to the same Evangelist, vi. 10, 11, he notices some Christian teachers, who, led aside by “the love of money, the root of all evil,” had “erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows;” and then emphatically says, “But thou, O man of God! flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.” In the Epistle to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. ii. 10, 11, 13), after stating that “God will send on those who believe not the truth, but take pleasure in unrighteousness, strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they may be damned,” he adds immediately, “But we are bound to give God thanks always for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory,” approbation, the complete complacent approval, “of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast.” And here, in the interesting passage chosen as a suitable subject of exhortation to you, after you have made a solemn profession of the faith of Christ, by observing the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, in which its leading doctrines were strikingly exhibited to you, and your obligations to Him solemnly acknowledged, the Apostle Jude, after speaking of “the mockers in the last day, who should walk after their ungodly lusts, sensual, not having the Spirit,” adds, with a similar transition, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” May the good Spirit who dictated this exhortation guide us in our illustrations of

it, and render them the means of making you “perfect in every good work, working in you that which is well pleasing in the sight” of our heavenly Father; that so ye may “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour,” “adorn his doctrine in all things,” and ultimately have “an entrance ministered to you abundantly into his everlasting kingdom!”

For the illustration of this exhortation it will be necessary that we attend, first, to the duty which the Apostle calls on Christians to perform, or the object which he calls on them to prosecute,—the keeping themselves in the love of God; and, secondly, to the means which he recommends for the performance of this duty, or the attainment of this object,—building themselves on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life.

Let us first, then, consider the duty which the Apostle here enjoins, or the object which he calls on Christians to prosecute, “Keeping themselves in the love of God.” There are two questions which must be here resolved, What are we to understand by “the love of God?” and, What by Christians “keeping themselves in the love of God?”

The love of God is often in the New Testament used to signify God’s love to us, as when it is said, that “God commendeth his love to us in that, when we were sinners, Christ his Son died for us;” that “nothing can separate” those who are in Christ Jesus “from the love of God;” when “the love of God,” along with “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and “the fellowship of the Holy Ghost,” is prayed for; when it is said, that “the kindness and love of God towards man has appeared,” been made manifest; and that “the love of God towards us was manifested, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we should live through him.” It is also used in the New Testament to signify our love to God, as when “the love of God” is mentioned by our Lord along with “judgment,” or righteousness, as one of the things passed over by the Pharisees when “they tithed mint

and rue, and all manner of herbs ;” and when he said to his unbelieving countrymen, “ I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you ;” when the Apostle prays that the hearts of Christians may be “ directed into the love of God ;” when it is said, that “ the love of the Father is not in him” who loves the world, and, that “ this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” There are passages in which it has seemed doubtful which of these meanings attaches to the phrase, as when “ the love of God” is said to be “ shed abroad in the heart” of Christians “ by the Holy Ghost given” to them, and when “ the love of God is said to be perfected in him who keepeth the word of Christ,” though I think there is no reason to doubt, that in the first passage the phrase denotes God’s love to the believer, not the believer’s love to God ; and even with regard to the second, when we compare it with the statement, “ If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us,” it seems probable that that is its reference there also. The ordinary meaning of the expression, “ the love of God,” in the New Testament, is, then, God’s love to us.

In the passage before us the word may be interpreted in either of the senses now noticed, without violating the usage of the New Testament, or the analogy of faith. It has been most common to consider the phrase as referring to the Christian’s love to God ; and the exhortation, “ Keep yourselves in the love of God,” is considered as going on the supposition that they already loved God, and as calling on them to continue to love him. ‘ Let not your love to God wax cold ; let it rather grow exceedingly in ardour and influence, as you obtain wider, clearer views of his loveliness and his loving-kindness.’ The objections to this mode of interpretation are, that “ the love of God,” and “ the mercy of our Lord Jesus,” are expressions which must be explained on the same principle of interpretation ; that the reference of the latter expression, which is incapable of any interpretation but one, must determine the meaning of the former, which, taken by itself, might, as we have seen, be interpreted in two dif-

ferent ways; and that "to be in the love of God" seems a strange, unnatural mode of describing our love to God, though not an unnatural mode of expressing our being the objects of his love. To have the love of God in us, not to be in the love of God, is the ordinary New Testament way of expressing our love to God; and it is difficult to find a reason why the Apostle should choose to express so plain an idea as Continue to love God, by so uncommon an expression as "Keep yourselves in the love of God." Besides, this mode of interpretation gives a disjointed appearance to what is obviously one closely connected exhortation, recommending one duty, "the keeping ourselves in the love of God, and the best means of performing it;" "building ourselves up on our most holy faith;" "praying in the Holy Ghost;" and "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life."

The interpretation which gives "the love of God" here its ordinary meaning, and considers the whole clause as an exhortation to Christians to beware of losing that place in the complacent approbation of their God and Father, which, as "his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus," they enjoyed, is the most natural one; and though at first sight there may seem to be difficulties connected with it, on close examination they will turn out to be merely apparent, not real ones; and that it brings out a meaning peculiarly rich in Christian practical instruction, and exactly corresponding with the obvious meaning and purpose of all the other parts of the passage.

There is a passage in one of our Lord's valedictory discourses very much calculated to throw light on the text, and which it is difficult to doubt that Jude, who heard our Lord deliver that discourse, had in his mind when he wrote the words now under consideration. John xv. 9, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love," that is, 'Keep yourselves in my love.' But what does continue in my love mean? It may mean, Continue to love me, though, as he is speaking of his love to them, not

theirs to him, that is not very probable ; but read on : “ If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide,” that is, continue (it is the same in the original), “ in my love ;” that seems to mean, I will continue to love you ; but read on, and you will find what settles the question, “ Even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and continue in his love,” that is, without doubt, ‘ He continues to love me.’ ‘ My Father loved me ; I kept his commandments ; I continue in his love ; that is, he continues to love me, and continues to love me because I have kept his commandments. I have loved you as my Father has loved me ; keep my commandments as I have kept his commandments, and ye shall continue in my love as I continue in his. I will continue to love you as he continues to love me.’ These words of our Lord not only explain the words of our text, but they also illustrate the sentiment it conveys.

To be “ in God’s love” is to be a possessor of God’s favour, to be in favour with him. Now, to be an object of Divine favour, may describe one or other of three very distinct yet intimately connected things, which we must take care neither to disjoin nor to confound, as confounding them may lead to serious mistakes ; for what may be affirmed of one of those things, may not, as a matter of course, be affirmed of all the rest.

Of the human being, whom from a special regard, of which no cause can be found out of the Divine nature, God determined, in preference to another human being, to save from a misery which both should equally deserve, it may be said that man is “ in the love of God ;” he is an object of special favour. Such a man obviously did not bring himself into God’s love, and as obviously does not keep himself in it. The determination to save, in no degree and in no sense depends on the will or the doing of him who is chosen to salvation. Every individual “ predestinated in love” to eternal life, ever was, and ever will be, “ in the love of God.” It were absurdity in this reference to bid Christians keep themselves in the love of God.

Of the elect sinner, who by nature was, like others, "a child of wrath," an heir of the curse, an object of the judicial displeasure of God, but who by the faith of the truth has been "justified freely through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and "made accepted in the beloved," "made the righteousness of God in him" who was "made sin in his room," it may also be said in truth that he is "in the love of God," an object of Divine special favour. He is in a state in which the perfections of the Divine character, and the principles of the Divine government, not only permit but secure his salvation. Into this state the sinner does not bring himself, and in this state he does not keep himself. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, tells us that he is brought into it "by the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe;" a power which he illustrates by comparing it with "the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand." And the Apostle Peter in his first Epistle, tells us that he is "kept" in this state "by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." It might not, as in the former case, be an absolute absurdity to call on the believing sinner to keep himself in the love of God in the sense of a justified state, but, if not absolute absurdity, it would be pernicious error. "There is," there shall be, there can be, "no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." Continued faith and holiness are necessary to the continued enjoyment of the blessings of a justified state; but it is not the faith and the holiness which secure the justification, but the justification which secures the faith and the holiness. It is not then to the Christian, viewed simply as an elect person, or as a justified person, that the injunction in the text is addressed.

Of the elect believing justified sinner, as the subject of the transforming influence of the Divine Spirit, it may be said, in a sense of which it could not be said of him as an elect person, nor of him simply viewed as justified, that God loves him, that he is an object of Divine favourable regard.

God loves him for the spiritual and moral loveliness which belongs to him as a part of the new creation in Christ Jesus. The favourable regard which God has towards his elect ones as elect, has no cause in them. They, in the Divine prescient mind, were contemplated as standing on the common level of the fallen race, nothing in them but guilt, depravity, and misery. He had mercy on them because he willed to have mercy on them. He had compassion on them because he willed to have compassion on them. The favourable regard which God has towards the justified as justified, has no cause in them either, but originates entirely in his being "well pleased for the righteous sake" of him who, when he was made sin in the room of sinners, "magnified the law and made it honourable;" by the propitiation made in his blood, reconciling the exercise of mercy with the demands of justice; to whom the sinner has become united according to the Divine method of salvation, by, under Divine influence, believing the gospel. Of the Divine love or favour in these two views of it, we can find no cause in its objects; the cause of the one being found in the sovereignty of the Divine nature, the cause of the other in the finished work of the Divine Redeemer.

The holiness of the believer is just that measure of conformity of nature, mind, and will, to the nature, mind, and will of God, which the Holy Spirit produces by the faith of the truth. Spiritual, moral excellence must be an object of the Divine approbation wherever it exists. It is so in himself. It is so in the holy angels. It was so in our innocent and holy first parents. It is so in all his children by faith in Christ Jesus, in the degree in which they possess it; he loves them because they are lovely, though of that loveliness he is the sole author.

The love or favour of God in the two former views of it, admit of no degrees. Every elect man, every justified man, stands on the same level before God. The security of one elect sinner is not greater than that of another. The consistency of the salvation of one justified person with the

character and government of God, is not greater than that of another. But the love of God, in this last sense which we are now considering, not only does, but must admit of an endless variety of degrees, both as to different individuals and to the same individual at different times. It admits of being to a considerable degree lost. It admits of being in an illimitable degree increased. The special love of benevolence is always the same, originating in an immutable cause, the sovereign will of God. The special love of amnesty, forgiveness, and acceptance, is always the same too, originating, as it does, also in an immutable cause, the finished work of the atonement by the one sacrifice of the incarnate Son. But the special love of complacency is regulated by the degree in which the object of it is possessed of the qualities which naturally draw it forth. The smallest measure of true holiness is an object of complacent delight to the holy and benignant Jehovah; but the larger the measure of true holiness possessed by the individual Christian, the higher the place he must occupy in the estimation of him who is perfect in knowledge, and wisdom, and holiness, as well as benevolence. It is, then, to the love or favour of God in this last sense, that the Apostle refers when he says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

There are, I apprehend, two very important closely connected injunctions bound up in this one exhortation. First, seek to preserve and increase that holiness of heart and life which are the objects of the Divine complacency, and which in the degree in which you possess them will make you the objects of the Divine complacency; and, secondly, seek the continuance and the increase of the apprehended manifestation of the Divine complacency. Seek to continue to please him, and seek, too, to obtain assurance that you are well pleasing in his sight. Let us say a word or two on these two closely connected aspects of the exhortation.

Christians are to seek to preserve and increase that holiness of heart and life which is the object of the Divine complacency; and which, in the degree it which it is

possessed, makes them the objects of Divine complacency. They are in this respect, as in many others, to be in the world even as he, their Lord, was in the world. The grace of God was on him, and it is on them; and he grew in favour with God, and so should they. It is most certain that Christians as sanctified persons are "God's workmanship," "formed by, as well as for himself;" and, as he has originated holiness in them, so he must increase it and perfect it. It is his "good work," he has begun it, and he "will perform it till the day of our Lord Jesus Christ;" but it is just as certain that they are active in their progressive sanctification. "God works in them," and by them, according to their intelligent and active nature. He keeps them in his love, not without their care and diligence, but by means of their own care and diligence. His promises do not supersede their exertions; the latter are the means of the fulfilment of the former. The prayer of our Lord, "Father, keep them," is ill interpreted when it leads to the conclusion they have no need to keep themselves. As Hooker has it, "To our own safety is required our own sedulity." It is an Antinomian notion that God always regards his people with equal complacency, that in them sin is not an object of his displeasure, or at any rate that they are not objects of his displeasure on account of it. Sin is hateful to God every where; nowhere so hateful as in his own people. He is displeased at their sin, and at them on account of their sin. "He is not a God that can have pleasure in iniquity." The man according to his own heart "displeased" him when he sinned, and drew down on himself fearful manifestation of this displeasure. "The just shall live by faith; but if he draw back," as drawing back, "God's soul has no pleasure in him." It is as going forward that he has pleasure in him. "His eye is on the righteous; with a pleasant countenance he beholdeth the upright." On the other hand, there is a "walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." There are "things which are pleasing in his sight," "sacrifices with which he is well pleased."

Now, the Christian must carefully avoid what is displeasing to God, if he would keep himself in the love of God. He must beware of sins in the heart, and sins in the life. He must “come out and be separate, and not touch the unclean thing,” if he would have the Lord God Almighty smile on him as his Father. He must “take heed, and not lose the things that have been wrought in him,” and on which the eye of God rests with complacency. He must “hold fast what he has attained.” He must “keep himself,” so that the wicked one may not pollute him with his touch. He must take heed lest his faith, without which neither he nor his works can be pleasing to God, fail or become weak, lest his love wax cold, lest his zeal abate. And he must never forget that mere standing still will not keep him in the love of God, for progression is the very law of his new nature. “To please God,” he must “abound more and more” in faith, and love, and hope, and zeal, and holy activity. God is displeased with the lazy and “unprofitable,” as well as with the wicked and “unfaithful servant.” The Christian must be constantly seeking the entire approbation, the unmingled complacent regard of God ; and, in order to this, he must seek to “cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.”

In the best there is much wanting, much wrong, much with which God is not, cannot be pleased. Therefore they ought “not, accounting themselves to have attained, or be already perfect, to forget the things that are behind, reach forward to those that are before, and press to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,” determined never to be satisfied till they are “presented to him without spot and blameless,” “holy as he is holy, perfect as he is perfect,” till they obtain entire conformity in mind and will to him, and become for ever incapable of a thought, feeling, or action, which is not perfectly pleasing in his sight.

The second thought suggested by the words is, that Christians should seek the continuance and increase of the appre-

hended manifestation of the Divine complacency in, and love to, them. The Christian is not only to seek to do the things which are pleasing to God, but to seek to have the conscious assurance that he is the object of the Divine complacency and love. Much of his comfort and much of his improvement depends on this.

It is obviously a very desirable thing that Christians should, on satisfactory grounds, be assured that they are the objects of the Divine approbation and special favour; and it is one of those desirable things, the attainment of which is to be sought, not merely in praying for it, but in the active use of the means fitted to attain it, without the use of which we have no reason to expect we shall attain it, and in the use of which we have no reason to doubt our attaining it.

The direct and the only safe way of arriving at this conclusion, that we enjoy the approbation of God, is just habitually carefully to avoid the temper and habits which we know he disapproves, and habitually to cultivate the tempers and habits which we know he approves. Confidence that God regards us complacently, apart from this, is, must be, dangerous delusion; and permanent, satisfactory evidence that we are in a state of pardon and acceptance with God, and that of course we are the objects of the electing love of God, can only be obtained in a course of holy disposition and conduct.

A solid, safe conviction on this subject, can rest only on one or other of two grounds: it generally rests on both. It may rest, in the first instance it does rest solely, on a clear, distinct apprehension of saving truth. I believe no man can have *that* without a corresponding degree of the hope of salvation. Or it may rest not apart from this, but, in connexion with this, on a perception in ourselves, notwithstanding all our deficiencies and faults, of that state of mind and heart which Scripture represents as characteristic of those who are in a justified state, by which calling and election are made sure. If I am neglecting the cultivation

and exercise of holy tempers, if I am indulging in unholy tempers and undutiful conduct, I cannot legitimately possess the confidence which rests directly on the saving truth believed; for the very prevalence of the wrong state of mind, is the strongest of all proofs that that truth is not before the mind. It is the same truth which sanctifies the soul, and which gives it confidence and a sense of security in God. If the sanctifying effect is not there, the truth is not there; and if there be confidence of the goodness of our state in such a case, it must be presumptuous confidence. It is confidence resting not on truth believed at the time, and its felt effects, but, it may be, on a recollection or imagination that we have believed it, and that it did produce certain effects; a most dangerous basis to rest such an edifice on. And then, with regard to the second ground, of coming to the conclusion that we are in a state of favour with God, it is quite obvious that it is entirely coincident with that, which satisfactorily proves that we are doing the things which are pleasing in his sight.

In either view of the subject it is plain, that assurance of salvation, "the full assurance of hope," cannot consist with the indulgence of known sin. Iniquities do, they must, separate between Christians and their God. Sins do, they must, hide his face from him. A cloud, a dark, cold cloud is raised, which prevents them from the enjoying the warm benignant radiance of the smiling countenance of the Father of lights.

The attempt to combine indulgence in sin with maintenance of confidence in the safety of our state, is a monstrous one. The very disposition to make it, is a strong reason why he who feels it should stand in doubt of himself. It is not the Christian, but the self-deceiver, who usually attempts it. No Christian can succeed in it; and the man who does so has no cause to congratulate himself. "Delusions, strong as hell, bind him fast," and he is saying, "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." "If we say we have fellowship with HIM who is light, and in

whom there is no darkness at all, while we are walking in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another;" that is, he and we have fellowship; he with us, as our reconciled Father; we with him, as his reclaimed prodigal children.

It is only in the belief of the truth respecting a free and full salvation to the chief of sinners, through the atonement made by Him, who, as "the mediator between God and man, gave himself a ransom for all," that solid confidence before God can be obtained. And that ground must never be shifted. But it is equally true, that it is in "keeping his commandments,"—which are, "to believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and to love one another," and thus "doing the things which are pleasing in his sight,"—we are to escape the condemnation of our own heart, "assure our hearts before him," and "hold fast our confidence before God;" for in no other way can we obtain permanent evidence, that in the faith of the truth we are justified, and have indeed obtained peace with God and free entrance into his gracious presence.

This, then, is the great object which the Apostle presses Christians to seek after: The cultivation of a course of disposition and conduct which shall meet the complacent approbation of their God and Father; and which, in his infinitely wise and holy arrangements, is connected with the enjoyment of the high satisfaction rising out of a well-grounded assurance of their interest in his special favour and immutable love.

Surely the truths to which our attention has been directed, afford a very powerful superadded motive to the cultivation of holy dispositions, and the performance of commanded duties. The path of holiness is the only path in which the Christian can enjoy the delights arising from a well-grounded assurance, that the eye, not of a righteously offended Sovereign, but of an infinitely benignant Father,

rests on him ; that all his sins have been freely pardoned for His sake whose blood cleanseth us from all sin ; and that he is indeed among those who were chosen in Christ, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blame ; and having been begotten again, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for them in heaven, are secured of being kept for it by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.

Oh, what folly is it in a Christian to do any thing that must interfere with these holy delights ! What can the world give to compensate for one frown of the serene countenance of our heavenly Father ; for one hour of doubt whether we are the objects of his approbation, the children of his love ?

It is plain that the duty we have been illustrating is a duty which only Christians can perform. Men must be “in God’s love” before they can keep themselves in his love. All men, by nature, are not “in his love,” in the sense of the text. They are guilty and depraved ; they are condemned by his law : and, if he were to approve of them, he must deny himself.

How dreadful the state of those who are not in God’s love, and in whom God’s love is not ; who are condemned already, and on whom his wrath abides ! If mercy prevents not, the condemnation in the book of the law must be ratified from the judgment-seat ; and the character of depravity becoming indelible, the sentiment of disapprobation must become unalterable. Fearful doom ! For one who was made capable of friendship with, conformity to God, to sink under the curse of his law, and the power of his disapprobation, for ever and ever !

Yet there is hope concerning such. Oh, sinners ! however guilty, however depraved, you may yet be in the love of God, and the love of God may yet be in you. Believe the revelation of mercy. Accept of the offered salvation. Give God credit for the love which is in his heart to sinners, and

which he has proved to be there, by the mission and sacrifice of his Son. Be reconciled to him in receiving his grace. He is "pacified towards you for all the iniquities which you have done." He proclaims, "I, even I, am He who blotteth out your iniquities for my own sake; and I will not remember your sin." "Return, return, thou backsliding child; I have redeemed thee." "Acquaint thyself thus with God; so shall good come to thee." "Take hold of his strength;" that gospel which is "the power of God unto salvation." "Make peace with him, and he will make peace with you." Then will "the love of God be shed abroad in your heart, by the Holy Ghost given to you;" then will you "love him" who has so loved you; then will the Father "love you, and give you everlasting consolation and good hope;" and then will you be enabled to "keep yourselves in the love of God, by building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life."

SERMON II.

ON BUILDING OURSELVES UP ON OUR MOST HOLY FAITH.

JER. 20, 21.—But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

THESE words contain an injunction on Christians of an important duty, and instructions respecting the means which, and the manner in which, this duty is to be performed. The duty enjoined is, “the keeping themselves in the love of God:” and this duty is to be performed “building themselves up on their most holy faith,” “praying in the Holy Ghost,” and “looking for the mercy of Lord Jesus unto eternal life.”

The last discourse I delivered to you, was occupied with the illustration of the duty enjoined. I endeavoured to show you, that “the love of God” here signifies the complacency with which God regards his graciously chosen and called, justified people, as regenerated and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, through the faith of the truth; and that the duty enjoined on Christians to keep themselves in this love of God, is to persevere and increase in those holy tempers and habits which are the foundation of this complacency, and in the continuance and growth of which they only can enjoy the habitual and permanent, constantly enlarging manifestation of this complacency.

I proceed now to the consideration of the means, by the use of which the performance of this important duty, and the enjoyment of the important privilege connected with it, may be secured. These are three, "building ourselves up on our most holy faith," "praying in the Holy Ghost," and "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life." This is the way, the only way, the certain way, of "keeping ourselves in the love of God."

I remark then, in the first place, that they who would keep themselves in the love of God, must "build themselves up on their most holy faith." Here the following questions require our attention ; first, What is the Christian's "faith?" secondly, Why is it termed "holy," "most holy?" thirdly, What is it for a Christian to "build himself up on this most holy faith?" and finally, How is this fitted to secure his "keeping himself in the love of God?"

Faith properly signifies that act or state of the human mind, in which a statement made on apparently satisfactory evidence is believed or reckoned true ; but according to that general law of language, by which the name of a mental affection is transferred to its object, faith not unfrequently signifies the statement believed : as when I say, 'That is my faith, though it may not be yours ;' meaning, 'That is what I believe, though it may not be what you believe.' A Christian's faith, then, may signify the *act* or the *object* of his belief, either his believing or that which he believes. In the New Testament, it sometimes signifies the one and sometimes the other. What is its precise signification in any particular passage, is to be ascertained from the context.

In the case before us, there can be no reasonable doubt but that the word "faith" means, the truth believed by the Christian, not his belief of the truth, though that he believes the truth is necessarily implied in its being termed *his* faith. Truth is not less truth that a man does not believe it ; but if he does not believe it, it is not his faith. Whatever be meant by faith here, it is the foundation of the spiritual edifice of holy character and privilege. Now that, accord-

ing to the Christian method of **salvation**, is, “the truth as it is in Jesus,” “the doctrine of Christ,” “the gospel of the grace of God,” “the gospel of our salvation,” understood and believed. The faith of this truth, in the sense of merely believing it, is not the foundation, but it is the act of building on the foundation. It is not my belief as an act of my mind that makes me holy and happy, it is the truth that I believe that is the source of my holiness and happiness, though from the constitution of my nature, if I did not believe it, that truth could not make me holy and happy. This is the gospel then, viewed not only as exhibited in the word, but as believed in the mind or heart, that is here termed the Christian’s faith.

Now, what is this gospel? The following are inspired summaries of it:—“I declare unto you the gospel, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he rose again from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The righteousness of God,” the Divine method of justifying sinners, “by the faith of Christ, attested by the Old Testament Scripture is manifested to all, and is upon *all* them that believe; for there is no difference,” in reference to this Divine method of justification, among them that believe; “for all of them have sinned, and lost, entirely lost, the Divine approbation; and all of them too are justified freely by God’s grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth as a propitiation by faith in his blood, declaring his righteousness in the remission of sins that are past, declaring his righteousness that he is just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus; given for our offences, raised again for our justification. The righteousness of faith speaketh of this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend to heaven, that is, to bring Christ down, or who shall descend into the deep, that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead? but what saith it? The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth and

thy heart, that is, the word of faith which we preach ; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved : for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation ; for the Scripture saith, ‘ Whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed.’ For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek : for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call on him : For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “ God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them ; for he hath made HIM to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” “ This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief.” “ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy hath he saved us ; by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. “ Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel.” “ Jesus delivers from the wrath to come.” “ The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin ;” and “ he is able to save to the uttermost those that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

This is “ the faith once delivered to the saints.” This is the very truth most sure, whether men believe it or not ; but while they believe it not, it is not their faith. It is the only foundation of Christian character and privilege, of true holiness and happiness. It is a sure foundation ; but unless a man believe, it is not his foundation. While he continues an unbeliever, he cannot build on it ; but when it is understood and believed, the man becomes a Christian, and the truth he believes becomes *his* faith, his foundation.

Let us now inquire why this faith, this truth believed, is

termed "holy, most holy," "your most holy faith." Holiness, as expressive of a moral quality, is plainly applicable only to moral beings and their dispositions and actions. When used in reference to a set of principles, as in the case before us, the meaning is, that these principles are the embodiment of the holy mind and will of the Holy, Holy One, who reveals them; and that if believed, if they become the faith of an individual, they will make him holy. They have a sanctifying, a powerfully sanctifying influence. A man cannot believe them at all without being made holy by them. The new mind created by them is a holy mind—a mind in conformity with the mind of the Holy One. The man is "transformed by this renewing of his mind." The more enlightened, the more steadfast, is a man's faith of the truth; the more thoroughly the faith delivered to the saint is his faith, the more holy is he.

The Spirit of God is the author of all holiness in the human mind; and he is so, not only as the revealer of the truth contained in the Scripture, but as the producer in the mind of that state, which alone can secure such an apprehension of the meaning and evidence of saving truth as will lead to its being believed; a state which is not natural to any human being, and which, if human nature were left to itself, would never occur in a single instance. He is the sanctifying Spirit, but he produces sanctifying effects only by sanctifying truth. He is the only efficient agent, but he employs appropriate means—means suited to the constitution of the being on whom he operates, and the nature of the effects he means to produce. "Sanctify them through thy truth," says the Saviour; "thy word is the truth." God "gives" all his people "the Holy Ghost, and puts no difference" between one class of them and another in this respect, but "purifies all their hearts by faith." The word of God preached by the Apostles, when received, not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of the living God; the word of God thus becoming their faith, "worketh effectually in them who believe it." "The grace of God" revealed in the

gospel, and when believed becoming the Christian's most holy faith, "teaches" what nothing else can teach, "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly." And the peculiar doctrines of the gospel are to be affirmed constantly, in order "that they who have believed in God may be careful to maintain good works." Thus "these things are good and profitable to men."

If men professing to be Christians remain unholy, there is mistake, serious mistake; if not timely rectified, fatal mistake somewhere; and the mistake commonly lies in one or other of these points. The man has a *faith*, but his faith is not the truth believed, but a lie believed; and it were strange indeed if the faith of falsehood could produce the same effect as the faith of truth. To wonder at this is as about as wise as to wonder that poison does not produce the same effect as wholesome food or salutary medicine. If a man who has a faith, a creed, a set of principles which he really believes, and yet continues unholy, he may rest assured that, whatever he may have believed, he has not believed the gospel of Christ. This is one of the points where there is often mistake. The other is this: a man may have the truth, to a very considerable extent at least, before his mind, and yet continue unholy, for the truth is not his *faith*; he contemplates it, speculates about it, talks about, contends about it, but never really believes it. There is no more wonder that sanctifying truth does not sanctify that man, than there is that nourishing provision does not nourish the man who merely looks at it; it may be analyses it, it may be prepares it, and presents it to others, but never partakes of it; never does what, according to the nature of his bodily constitution, is necessary to his deriving advantage from it. According to the nature of man's mental constitution, faith or sanctifying truth is as necessary to personal sanctification as eating nourishing provision is to personal nourishment. "Holy faith" is just equivalent to sanctifying faith, "most holy faith" to powerfully sanctifying faith. A full gospel fully believed is fitted to "sanctify a man wholly, and to preserve

the whole spirit and soul and body blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus."

Having thus ascertained what is the Christian's faith—the gospel believed—and what is the force of the epithet here given to his faith, "most holy faith," as describing the sanctifying, the powerfully sanctifying, influence of the gospel believed, let us now proceed to inquire what is meant by a Christian building himself up on his most holy faith.

The general idea of building up is progressive improvement; of building a person's self up, progressive improvement by means of the active exertions of the individual himself. The figure is applied both to the Christian church as a body, and to Christian men as individuals. To the Christian church, "Ye are," says the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians speaking plainly to them as a body, "Ye are God's building." "Ye," says the Apostle Peter in his First Epistle, "living stones, are built up a spiritual house." The various orders of the Christian ministry are said to be "for the edifying" or building up "of the body of Christ—that is, the church." Our Lord says, that "he will build his church on a rock;" and his Apostle says, that that church, composed of Jews and Gentiles, is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner stone." So Christians, when spoken of as individuals, are represented as "rooted and built up in Christ, and established in the faith as they have been taught;" and they are enjoined to comfort themselves together, and to "edify or build up one another." On looking carefully at the passage before us, I think there can be little doubt that the reference is not to the church as a body, but to Christians as individuals, all the duties enjoined being obviously personal duties—"praying in the Holy Ghost," "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

It has been a question among expositors, whether the duty enjoined here and in the following verse, be the duty the Christian owes to his brother or to himself. There is no doubt that the words will admit of the translation which has

been given them, “build one another up on your most holy faith;” “keep one another in the love of God;” and that similar phrases are in some places in the New Testament rightly rendered in this way, as in Ephesians iv. 32, and Colossians iii. 16. But the more literal and common rendering is that which our translators have adopted, and it best suits with the rest of the passage.

Taking for granted, then, that the exhortation refers to the duty which a Christian man owes to himself, let us inquire into the meaning of the injunction, and into the manner in which the duty enjoined is to be performed. The meaning of the injunction varies according as you render the words, “building yourselves up *in* your most holy faith,” or with our translators, “building yourselves up *on* your most holy faith.” In the first case, the injunction is a command, corresponding to the prayer of the disciples, “Lord, increase our faith;” a command to seek wider, and clearer, and more impressive views of Divine truth and its evidence; and in this view of the passage, “faith” would stand rather for believing than for the thing believed. This brings out a very good meaning, and a meaning suitable enough to the connexion; for there can be no doubt it is by strengthening faith that we are to be enabled to keep ourselves in the love of God. Yet the rendering of our translators, which is equally warranted, gives a much wider signification, and one which still more powerfully bears on the Apostle’s object, as suggesting the proper mode of complying with his principal exhortation. We consider the words, then, as they stand in our version, as conveying the Apostle’s idea, and proceed to their illustration, “Building yourselves up on your most holy faith.”

The gospel of the grace of God, in its various statements, is represented as a foundation on which the Christian man is enjoined to build himself up, to raise the whole frame of sentiments, and dispositions, and habits, which form the new man in the full stature of maturity; or, more in accordance with the figure in the passage before us (though the

passage I refer to describes the church as a body), "fitly to frame together" on this foundation the various parts of the gradually rising "holy temple in the Lord, a habitation of God through the Spirit." The Apostle does not call on them to lay the foundation, that had been done in the word, "Behold I lay in Zion a foundation;" he does not bid them rest themselves on the foundation, that had been done when they believed, when the Christian truth became their faith; but he calls on them to build on that foundation, to build themselves on that foundation.

His leading thoughts are: The truth believed is intended to be an operative principle, and to call your powers of activity into vigorous exertion in developing its energies. To intimate the tendency of Christian truth, understood and believed, to produce all holiness of heart and life, it is compared to seed sown in the earth, which, when favoured with the influences of heaven, leads to the development of the whole plant or tree; while to place in a clearer point of view the place which human activity has assigned it in the restorative process, it is represented as the foundation intended for a superincumbent edifice, a foundation well able to sustain it, and exactly suited to the kind of materials of which this edifice must be composed, but which materials must be placed on it. The cultivation of holy temper, the discharge of commanded duties, the welcome entertainment of warranted comforts and encouragements, are all various ways of building ourselves up, and they are all based on our most holy faith. No disposition is to be cherished but what that faith naturally excites; no duty to be engaged in but what that faith lays a foundation for; no expectations or consolations admitted but what that faith suggests; and, on the other hand, every disposition, duty, and consolation, which legitimately rises out of this faith, which fits in to a building raised on this foundation, has a claim to be attended to. It is materially the same idea as when the Apostle Paul represents (Rom. vi. 17) the Christian doctrine, our most holy faith, as a mould into which the human character, fused as it

were by the fire of Divine influence, is poured, in order to be fashioned anew, every doctrine being intended and fitted to form the new man to solid strength, or easy activity, or moral loveliness.

Perhaps the best commentary that is any where to be found on the words before us, is that in the commencement of the Second Epistle of the Apostle Peter, in which he exhorts "them who have obtained like precious faith with the Apostles, who have been called through the knowledge of our God, and of Jesus our Lord, and by a glorious power, to whom have been given exceeding great and precious promises; that by these they might become partakers of a divine nature, and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust;" to "give all diligence, to add to their faith, virtue, or rather fortitude; and to fortitude, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance or moderation; and to moderation, patience or perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For that if these things be in them, and abound, they would make them that they should be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." "Peter, like Jude, does not exhort Christians to seek after faith. He supposes them to possess it already. He addresses them as believers, and calls on them to pursue a course worthy of their faith, corresponding with their faith, and to which their faith binds them."¹ This is the way to build up one's self into an edifice, sacred to the honour, employed in the service, blessed with the presence, beautified by the glory of the Lord.

The manner in which the Christian is thus to build himself up on his most holy faith is, just by endeavouring habitually to keep before his mind the gospel, the whole gospel, in its meaning and evidence; and to allow it to have its fair influence on his whole character and conduct, guarding against the seductive influences of the present evil world, which, like Sanballat and the Horonites, are continually

¹ Jay.

attempting to interrupt the building of the Lord. It is by steadily contemplating the glory of the Lord, to change the figure, as it appears in the face of Christ Jesus delineated in the gospel, that we, like mirrors, are to be made to exhibit a dim resemblance to its heavenly radiance, being changed by that which is so glorious into something glorious also, as the opaque moon reflects the effulgence of the orb of light round which it revolves when it is turned towards it. To revert to the figure in the text, every stone in the foundation must have its corresponding superstructure. On the doctrine of Christ's devotement for us, must be built our devotement to him; on his love to us, our love to him, and to those whom he loves; on the value of the soul, earnest persevering endeavour to secure the salvation of our own souls and the souls of others; on the promise of God to make all things work for our good, entire resignation to the dispensations of his providence. Every stone in the foundation must be built upon, that so a stately symmetrical structure may be raised.

It only remains, now, that on this part of the subject, I briefly show how this building of himself up on this most holy faith is fitted to tell favourably on the Christian keeping himself in the love of God. A very few remarks will suffice to make this plain. I cannot secure the continued complacent approbation of God, but by avoiding those things which offend him, and doing the things which are well-pleasing in his sight; and thoroughly depraved as my nature is, "for I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing," I will not do the things which please him, I will do the things which displease him, unless I remain under the continued influence of that most holy faith, which, by the good Spirit enabling me to understand and believe it, has produced in me whatever the eye of that God, who hath no pleasure in wickedness, regards with a pleasant countenance. In building myself up on this most holy faith, I do what he commands me to do, and therefore he must be pleased with me doing it; and just in the measure in which I succeed, I

realize that character which, being conformed to his mind and will, must be the object of his complacent regard.

The connecting with the exercise of every holy temper, and the performance of every commanded duty, the contemplation of "our faith most holy," has a double effect on keeping us in the enjoyment of a comfortable sense of the Divine kind regard. The truth on which rests all our confidence before God, all our hope for eternity, is kept habitually before the mind; and we are preserved both from those misconceptions of the Divine character, and from those sins which separate between us and our God, and hide his reconciled countenance from us, for our faith is faith most holy. It is plain, that just in the measure in which a Christian builds himself up on his holy faith, will he keep himself in the love of God. So says the Apostle Peter: He who does not build himself up on his holy faith, who does not add to his faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity; "he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." Even if a forgiven sinner, he loves all the comfort of knowing that he is forgiven; while, on the other hand, he who builds himself up on his most holy faith, "makes his calling and election sure, and has an entrance ministered to him abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." So says the Apostle John, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him; for if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God; and whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his

commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and Love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us."

The consideration of the other means for keeping ourselves in the love of God, the praying in the Holy Ghost, and the looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus to eternal life, must be reserved for discussion till some future opportunity.

This discourse, like the one which preceded it, has been addressed all but exclusively to true Christians. They, they only, can build themselves up on their most holy faith. It naturally, however, brings before the mind a great general truth, in which all men are equally interested, to which, in conclusion, I wish for a little to turn your minds. The truth I refer to is this : That Christian truth believed is the only basis on which can be raised in the human mind solid hope or true holiness.

There is no hope for man, the sinner, but through the free grace of God, manifested in harmony with his justice, through the atonement of his Son; and that hope cannot become mine, if I do not believe the gospel, which contains the only and the well-accredited account of that harmonious manifestation of Divine grace and righteousness on which alone rational hope, in a righteously condemned sinner, can rest. There is no holiness for man but in that love to God, and conformity to his character, mind, and will, of which he is naturally destitute; and it is only in the gospel we have such views of God as are fitted to excite love in a being like man; only in the gospel that we have such a revelation of the mind and will of God as makes conformity to them possible; and the gospel must be believed, in order to these views and this revelation producing their appropriate effects.

Nothing can come in the place of the gospel believed to serve these purposes. Good works will not serve the pur-

pose ; for where are really good works to come from, in the absence of just views of the Divine character, which only can proceed from faith in the gospel ? And if we had them, in all the extent that some men seem to dream of their being attainable by man, how could they form a ground of hope to a sinner ? how can they, which are but imperfect payment of present debt, obliterate “the handwriting” that is against the sinner, the curse which has gone forth against every soul that hath done evil ? and as to holiness as an internal quality, surely good works can never confer it ; we must have it, in order to our doing good works.

Strong religious impressions can as little stand in the room of the gospel believed, as a safe foundation of hope, or a permanent source of motive. Feelings, except as they are excited and regulated by true principles, are in every respect valueless, in many respects dangerous, things. Instead of being able to support hope, they need themselves to be sustained by faith. The religion which rests on mere excited feeling is at best a tottering fabric. It gives way in the hour of temptation ; it will be consumed in the day when every man’s work must be tried by the fire of Divine judgment. Nothing, nothing but the true gospel, really believed, can give a well-grounded hope to the sinner, or produce in him a consistent, progressive, permanent holiness.

To men, then, seeking a ground of hope and confidence before God, the advice we must give is, Believe and hope : “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” No hope for thee but in him ; no access to him but by believing the truth respecting him.

To those who are putting the question,—How must we work the works of God ? how are we to obtain that holiness without which no man can see the Lord ?—our answer must be, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.” It is the truth—the truth about him understood and believed—that alone can make you free : that will “make you free indeed ;” and “enable you to

walk at liberty, keeping God's commandments;" to "serve him without fear, in righteousness and holiness, all the days of your life." To lead men, who are concerned about the interests of eternity, to seek and expect either hope or holiness by works of righteousness, or by internal exercises of mind, instead of directing them immediately to the only Saviour, the only Author of hope and holiness, in the only way in which they can come to him—in the belief of the truth respecting him as contained in the Divine testimony—is to delude, and, if they are not brought under better guidance, to destroy them.

Unconverted men! we cannot bid you build yourselves up on your most holy faith; for the most holy faith is not your faith. You do not believe the gospel; if you did, you could not be destitute of hope, destitute of holiness, as you are, and as I doubt not some of you are aware that you are. But while we cannot call on you to build up what has never been laid on the foundation, we can, and we do most earnestly, beseech you to look at the gospel, the most holy faith of all Christians, and tell us if it is not fitted to be a foundation for you as well as for them; if you do not stand in need of such a foundation; if you know of any other foundation which can form a basis for hopes, and for a character, which will bear the scrutiny of the final judgment; and if you can give any satisfactory reason why, in the belief of the truth, this foundation should not become your foundation. This, this alone, is the immovable rock; all else is shifting sand or yielding air. We beseech you, as you value the interests of eternity, begin at the beginning; it is the only way of reaching the end.

We call on you, then, in the faith of the truth, to receive Jesus Christ, the Saviour and the Lord; and, "having received him, walk in him; rooted and built up in him." Oh! may the good Spirit accompany these statements and exhortations with his efficacious influence! opening the understandings of unconverted men, to understand the truth as it is in Jesus! opening their hearts to receive the love of

the truth, so that they may be saved by it ! And, under His continued influence, may those who have commenced building on the foundation of our “most holy faith,” prove themselves “wise and diligent builders;” show that “they have a mind to work !” Then will the spiritual house in every heart, “fitly framed, grow into a holy temple in the Lord ;” and ere long the copestone will be laid on, amid the shoutings of the angels, and of the spirits of the just made perfect. “How beautiful ! Grace, grace unto it !” Meanwhile, remembering that “we have not attained, neither are already perfect, let us forget the things that are behind, reach forth to those things which are before, and press to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord !

SERMON III.

ON PRAYING IN THE HOLY GHOST.

JUDE 20, 21 —But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

WHEN I entered on the consideration of the interesting passage of Scripture, now a third time read to you, as the subject of discourse, I proposed to attend, first, to the duty which the Apostle calls on Christians to perform, or the object which he calls on them to prosecute, the “keeping themselves in the love of God;” and secondly, to the means which he recommends for the performance of this duty, the attainment of this object, “building themselves up on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

The first discourse was entirely occupied with the first of these topics. In that discourse I endeavoured to show that “the love of God” here, signifies the complacency with which God regards his graciously chosen, called, justified people, as regenerated and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, through the belief of the truth; and that for Christians to keep themselves in this love, is to preserve and increase in those holy tempers and habits which are the foundation of *this* complacency; and in the continuance and growth of

which they can only enjoy the habitual, permanent, ever-enlarging manifestation of this complacency.

In the second discourse, I entered on the consideration of the means recommended by the Apostle for the performance of the duty enjoined, the attainment of the object proposed; “the building ourselves up on our most holy faith, the praying in the Holy Ghost, and the looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” The illustration of the first of these topics, “the building ourselves up on our most holy faith,” required all the time we had to dispose of on that occasion. I endeavoured to show you, that “faith” here means the Christian’s belief; that which he believes; “the doctrine of Christ;” “the gospel of the grace of God;” and that this is “most holy,” being the embodiment of the holy mind and will of Him who only is holy; and, when believed, powerfully sanctifying. I attempted to explain what is meant by a Christian “building himself up on this most holy faith,” the improving its various principles for the formation of his character and the regulation of his conduct; and how this “building himself up on his most holy faith,” is calculated to secure his “keeping himself in the love of God.”

I proceed now to the consideration of the second means recommended by the Apostle to enable Christians to keep themselves in the love of God—“praying in the Holy Ghost.” The theme, then, of this discourse is, ‘If we would “keep ourselves in the love of God,” we must “pray in the Holy Ghost.”’ And here there are three questions to which we must endeavour to find satisfactory answers. What is it to pray? What is it to pray in the Spirit? And how is praying in the Spirit calculated to help the Christian to keep himself in the love of God?

I. Prayer is very well defined in that admirable compendium of Divine truth, the Westminster Assembly’s Shorter Catechism, a little book which contains in it the substance of many large volumes; a book, the contents of which almost every child among us can repeat, but which comparatively

few grown up people fully understand ; “ prayer is,” in that excellent summary of faith and duty, described as “ the offering up of the desires of the heart to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies.” The word prayer, in strict propriety of language, is expressive only of request or petition. To pray to a person, is to seek with earnestness from that person something that we wish to obtain, and which we are persuaded he can bestow : but the term is often, both in Scripture and in theological discourse, employed as descriptive of the whole of that devotional intercourse which man in the present state holds with God. In this comprehensive sense it includes solemn invocation, or calling on the name of God ; speaking to him as one connected with and near us ; addressing him by one or more of the appellations by which, in the holy Scriptures, he has made himself known to men ; an intimation of our design to worship him, and our desire to have communion with him ; an expression of our insufficiency for the rightly conducting such an exercise, and of our wish and hope for the promised assistance of his Spirit ; an adoration of his excellencies, as displayed in his works and revealed in his word ; an acknowledgment of our insignificance as creatures, and our ill desert as sinners ; a confession of the depravity of our nature, and the sins of our life, our desert of punishment, and our unworthiness of mercy ; a deprecation of all evil, temporal and spiritual, present and future, from ourselves and others ; an equally extensive petition for all good ; an enforcement of our petitions by appropriate scriptural arguments from the greatness of our wants, and our utter incapacity to supply them ; from the excellencies of the Divine nature, infinite power, wisdom, righteousness, kindness ; from the relations in which God stands to us, and the promises he has made to us ; from the atoning sacrifice of his Son, whose blood cleanseth from all sin ; and from his ever enduring, all prevalent intercession, by which he is able to save us to the uttermost, coming to God by him ; a dedi-

cation of ourselves to God, to be his only, wholly, and for ever ; a grateful acknowledgment of all his mercies, and an humble expression of confidence, that our devotional services will be graciously accepted, and our petitions complied with. And in doing all this, the word of God is to be our rule of conduct ; the mediation of Jesus Christ the ground of our hope ; and the Holy Spirit, in his enlightening and sanctifying influences, our guide and helper.¹ This is prayer, which is just the Christian's laying open his mind and heart to his Father in heaven, telling what he thinks of Him, and what he expects from Him ; acknowledging his own emptiness, his conviction of the Divine fulness, and his desire and hope that all his need will be supplied out of that fulness, according to its glorious riches.

Thus to pray is the Christian's habitual privilege and duty : and every thing that interests him may, and ought to be, the subject of prayer. "In every thing in prayer, with thanksgiving, should he make his requests known to God." Especially should every thing connected with his duty and his interests as a Christian, a new creature, a son of God, an heir of immortality, be made the subject of prayer. It is plain, then, that Christians ought to pray in reference to their "keeping themselves in the love of God," and in reference to their "building themselves up on their most holy faith," in order to their keeping themselves in the love of God.

It is prayer, with this particular reference, that is enjoined in the passage before us. What then, does the Apostle call on Christians to pray for ? We are to pray, that we may be enabled to keep ourselves in the love of God ; that we may be preserved from cherishing any disposition, or doing any action, which would diminish God's complacency in us ; that in order to this we may be blessed with spiritual perspicacity and spiritual sensibility, so as readily to perceive, and instantaneously to shrink back from, every thing that would be displeasing in his sight ; that we may be enlight-

¹ Watts.

ened in the knowledge of all duty, and in opposition to the biases of our depraved nature, and the influence of temptation, whether from spiritual agents or external objects, be inclined and determined to do all duty at all hazard ; that we may be made sensible of the slightest intimations both of the approbation and disapprobation of God, and be preserved from trifling with conviction, tampering with temptation, and continuing secure in sin.

And, in order to our keeping ourselves in the love of God, we are especially to pray that we may be enabled to “build ourselves up on our most holy faith.” For this purpose we are to ask, that by God’s good Spirit we may be led into wide accurate views, and deep impressive convictions, respecting every part of “our most holy faith ;” that we may be made distinctly to see and readily to yield to the fair practical influences of every portion of it ; that every part of the foundation may be built upon, and every part of the building raised to the proper height, “fitly framed and compacted together ;” that we may be enabled to derive from every part of the word of God, all of which is given by his inspiration, all the profit for “doctrine and reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness,” which it is intended and calculated to afford ; that we may be made to know what we ought to do to please God, how we are to do it, and why we are to do it ; that it may be “a light to our feet, and a lamp to our path,” guiding the mind, influencing the heart, forming the character, regulating the conduct. These are the things which the apostle here calls on Christians to pray for in order that they may keep themselves in the love of God, and in order that for this purpose they may build themselves up on their most holy faith.

II. We are prepared now to enter on our second inquiry, What is meant by “praying in the Holy Ghost ?” The Holy Ghost is that Divine person, who, along with the Father and the Son, exists in the unity of the Godhead. That the term Holy Ghost is not uniformly or ordinarily employed in Scripture to denote a personification of a

Divine attribute or influence, but usually designates a real personal agent, can scarcely be doubted by any attentive, if but unprejudiced reader. Making all due allowance for the boldness of oriental figure, there are many passages from which no consistent meaning can be extracted but on this supposition. In the simplest narrative, and in the most unimpassioned statements, the Holy Ghost, or Spirit of God, is represented as performing works which it would be absurd to refer to an attribute or influence; and that the person designated by this appellation is Divine, is clearly proved by the passages of Scripture in which names, and attributes, and works characteristic of, peculiar to Deity, are ascribed to Him. Nothing more clearly establishes both the personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost, than the two facts, that in the administration of baptism, and in the apostolical benediction, He is associated with the Father and the Son, whose distinct personality has scarcely been questioned, and whose supreme divinity is capable of such abundant proof. It would be an inconceivable incongruity, a monstrous absurdity, that a religious ordinance should be administered by the authority of two persons, and of one of their attributes or influences, and that a benediction should be prayed for from, or pronounced in, the name of so strange a combination. It is equally inconsistent with all just ideas of such subjects to suppose, that an ordinance should be administered in the name of the one God and two creatures, or that a blessing should be supplicated in the same breath from Him and from them.

In the economy of grace, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are each of them represented as occupying peculiar offices and relations, and performing the functions that are appropriate to such relations and offices. All things are of the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. To the Spirit belongs what is ordinarily called the applicatory part of the work of salvation. It is by his operation and influence, that the individual sinner is brought into the state, and formed to the character, by which he is made capable of enjoying the blessings which flow to men from

the grace of the Father, through the mediation of the Son. It is the Holy Ghost who produces in man that faith of the truth, which unites him to the Saviour in his atoning death and justifying resurrection. It is He who makes the sinner a new creature, and brings him into a new creation. It is He who gives and sustains spiritual life, and who inclines and enables the new creature to perform all its functions. He is the author of all right thinking, and feeling, and acting, in reference to God, and things unseen and eternal.

The Holy Ghost is particularly represented as having an agency in producing and sustaining that state of mind and heart, of thought and desire, of which prayer is the expression. An Old Testament prophet, speaking of New Testament times, terms him "the Spirit of grace and supplication;" and represents the pouring out of his influence as a character of these times. And the Apostle Paul, in one passage of Scripture, informs us, that "the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." When "we know not what to pray for as we ought, He maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered;" "He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." And in another passage he tells us, that God, who hath "sent forth into the world his Son to redeem" us, hath "sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying," that is, making us cry, "Abba, Father." The Apostle Paul enjoins the Ephesians "to pray in the Spirit." And the Apostle Jude here exhorts those to whom he wrote to "pray in the Holy Ghost."

To pray *in* the Holy Ghost is an idiomatic expression, of equivalent meaning with, to pray under the influence of the Holy Ghost; but this meaning is very forcibly expressed in this peculiarity of phrase. It indicates, that the persons to whom it is applied are, as it were, united to the Holy Spirit; so that their individual minds and wills are, as it were, lost in his. That to be "in the Spirit," which is the same thing as to be "filled with the Spirit," means to be under his influence, is quite plain from such expressions as the following: "Jesus was led in the Spirit into the wilder-

ness." Paul says, "I go bound in the Spirit to Jerusalem." John says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." "Immediately I was in the Spirit." "He 'carried me away in the Spirit." The person possessed of the gift of tongues, is said "in the Spirit to speak mysteries." "To walk in the Spirit," is to act under the Spirit's influence.

It is a question, obviously of vital importance here, what is to be understood by praying under the influence of the Holy Spirit? In replying to this question, men have run into opposite extremes. On the one hand, some would restrict it to prayer directly dictated to the individual by an influence similar to that by which the writers of Scripture were inspired; considering prayer in the Spirit as something peculiar to the miraculous age of Christianity, and representing it as absurd to bid men now pray in the Spirit, as it would be to bid them speak a language they had never learned, and heal disease by a touch or a word: and others consider, that there is no prayer in the Spirit but when a sensible impulse of the Spirit excites to prayer; concluding, therefore, that set times for prayer are unwarrantable, and worse than useless. These are mistakes in one extreme. There are others who, running to the opposite extreme, hold, that to pray in the Spirit is merely, in the matter and manner of our prayer, to endeavour, in the exercise of those faculties which the Spirit of God has given us as men—that "inspiration of the Almighty," by which he has given us "more understanding than the beasts of the field, more wisdom than the fowls of heaven"—to regulate ourselves by the directions which he has given us in those Scriptures, which were written by holy men moved by him.

We shall endeavour to state the truth, the doctrine of Scripture, on this interesting subject, as distinctly and briefly as possible, guarding against both extremes. To pray under the influence of the truth respecting God and ourselves, understood and believed by us, and to pray in the Spirit, are substantially the same thing; for not only is that truth contained in a book, written by men inspired by the

Spirit, but it is only in the degree that the mind of the individual is influenced by the Spirit, that this truth is, or can be, truly understood and believed by him. There is no prayer in the true sense of the word, but "prayer in the Spirit." Prayer is the expression of a sincere desire of what is necessary and sufficient to true happiness, addressed to the true God in the hope of obtaining it, because he has promised it. To this there is plainly required, a knowledge of God and ourselves, of what we need and what he has promised; a desire of heavenly and spiritual blessings; and a confidence in the power, grace, and truth of God; a knowledge, and desire, and confidence, which no unconverted man possesses, and which can originate in nothing but in the Holy Spirit influencing the mind to attend to, to understand, and to believe the truth, and influencing the mind by the truth thus understood and believed. No man can pray, in the only just meaning of the term, but "in the Spirit." Even he who prays for the Spirit, if he does more than use mere words, if he understand what he asks, and really wishes to obtain it, prays "in the Spirit;" for it is the Spirit alone which can teach man that he needs the Spirit. No natural man, no mere animal man, no man just as born of the flesh, knows his need of the Spirit, or really desires the Spirit. And just in proportion as a man is influenced by the Spirit, in the two ways we have noticed, will he pray both as to matter, and manner, and effect, as he "ought to pray."

He will pray intelligently, both with regard to God and himself. He will not, like the Samaritans, worship he knows not what; he will know whom he worships; for, "in the Spirit," he has been made to "know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." He knows his immaculate holiness, his inflexible justice, his omnipotent power, his infinite wisdom, his redeeming kindness, his inviolable faithfulness. And he knows all this, for he has been taught it by the Spirit. The Spirit has led him to understand and believe the truth revealed by him on these subjects. He knows, for the same reason, his own deep, in-

excusable guilt, thorough depravity, entire helplessness; he knows that the possession of God's favour, and conformity to God's image, are necessary and sufficient for his happiness; he knows that God has promised these blessings; and, knowing this, he knows what things to ask of God.

He will pray believingly, not speaking as it were to the empty air, or addressing an imaginary being, but speaking to the great Reality; for he knows, he believes, that God is, a much less common attainment than many suppose; and, expecting to obtain what he is asking, being persuaded that what he asks is according to God's will, is what he has promised, and what he both can and will confer. He knows and believes that He is "the rewarder of," that he will do good to, "those who diligently seek him" in the way of his appointment: and in the spirit of a son he will go boldly to his Father in heaven, on the throne of grace, in the full assurance of finding mercy and obtaining grace.

He will pray fervently; for having believed the truth through the Spirit, he perceives the intrinsic excellence of the blessings he asks; and the desire of his heart is drawn out towards their attainment. Just in proportion as, "in the Spirit," he is enabled to realize to his mind the heavenly and spiritual blessings pledged in the exceeding great and precious promises, will he "with his heart desire them, with his Spirit within him seek them early."

He will pray reverentially. The truth about God's infinite grandeur and excellence, the truth about his own situation and character as a creature and a sinner, kept before the mind by the Spirit, will so abase every high thought, as that "God alone shall be exalted," "sanctified in the heart, and made the fear and dread."

He will pray submissively. For the Spirit, by the word, teaches him that his Father in heaven, infinitely wise and infinitely benignant, knows best how and when to answer his prayer; what are the blessings needed in his circumstances; what is the measure and manner in which they should be bestowed.

We see now what it is to pray in the Spirit. It is with minds enlightened, and hearts purified, and desires awakened and regulated by the Spirit, leading us to believe the truth, and influencing us by the truth believed, to pray with intelligence, and faith, and fervour, and humility, and submission, for the blessings which God has promised; and the more intelligently, believingly, fervently, humbly, and submissively we pray, the more fully do we comply with the command, Pray in the Spirit.

To some, prayer "in the Spirit" may seem rather a privilege than a duty. In truth it is both. It is equally true that the Christian, of himself, "knows not how to pray as he ought," and that he ought "always so to pray, and not to faint." That man is ignorant of the very elements of spiritual Christianity who does not know, that what is beyond all doubt man's duty, cannot, owing to his depravity, be performed but by Divine assistance; and that the Holy Spirit works that in us which God requires of us, "writing his law on our hearts," and "working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight."

That we may habitually pray "in the Spirit," two things are absolutely necessary; that we should study the mind of the Spirit in his Word, and that we should seek the influence of the Spirit by prayer. That knowledge of ourselves and of God, which is necessary to our praying in the Spirit, is not to be expected to be miraculously put into our minds, as it was into the minds of inspired men. We are to "search the Scriptures," and to examine ourselves, that we may know who God is, and who we are; what we need, and what he has promised. And we are to pray *for* the Spirit, that we may pray *in* the Spirit. The first, the converting influence of the Spirit, comes unasked by the individual, though not unasked by the great Intercessor. It comes unasked, otherwise it would never come at all. But further communications of the Spirit are to be obtained by prayer; and it is presumption to expect them without it. It deserves notice, that it is with reference to this among

other promises—"I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them," that it is added, "Thus saith the Lord God : I will yet for this be inquired of the house of Israel to do it for them." And ye know the words of our Lord Jesus: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion. If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask him?"

In connexion with these observations it is important to remark, that the influence of the Spirit in prayer is not always, is not usually sensible, nor is it always most powerful when we think we most powerfully feel it. It is not usually to be distinguished from the operations and feelings of the mind, influenced by truth according to the laws of our constitution. And it is a sad delusion to think we must live in the neglect of prayer; or give over praying because we feel as if we were not under Divine influence. No. We are to pray for the Spirit; and "it is usually while we are praying that we obtain grace to pray."¹

Indeed, though I should tremble at the thought of awakening either hopes or anxieties unwarranted by God's word, I must say that I am persuaded, that if Christians would but wait on the Lord in the believing study of his word, and in prayer for the Spirit, they might safely count on being enabled to pray "in the Spirit," in a degree and with an effect which would contribute to their spiritual enjoyment and improvement in a way that would astonish

¹ Fuller.

themselves. Instead of the comparative deadness which so often characterises the prayers even of true Christians, seasons of devotion would be found, “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, the Spirit.” “Things seen and temporal” would all but vanish, “things unseen and eternal” fill up the whole field of vision, and, instead of a reluctance to pray, there would be a feeling as if we could do nothing else. We should know what to pray for, and how to pray as we ought, and our hearts would be filled with holy desire, our mouths with Scriptural arguments. We should be brought near God, even to his seat, and allowed to pour our complaints and thanksgivings, our joys and sorrows, our fears and desires, into his very bosom. We should have ineffable longings after God, the living God. We should be enabled to “launch forth,” as a great and devout man has it, “into the depths of the divine perfections and promises, and possess ourselves as much as possible of the fulness of God.”¹ It is probable that there are few Christians who have not experienced at times—alas! how seldom; at intervals, alas! how distant—something like this. Why, oh why, should it not be our daily, our hourly experience? Why should we sit still and cry, “My leanness, my leanness?” while he is saying, “Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.”

I have only farther to remark here, that the only satisfactory proof that our prayers are “in the Spirit,” is to be found in the effects resulting from them. If they do not lead us to keep ourselves in the love of God, we have reason to fear, that whatever spirit we prayed by, it was not the Holy Spirit. The very design of praying in the Holy Ghost is, that we may keep ourselves in the love of God.

III. With a few words as to how praying in the Spirit conduces to our keeping ourselves in the love of God, I shall conclude the discourse; and a very few words are all that is necessary for this purpose.

Praying in the Spirit is, in its own nature, fitted to be sub-

¹ Hall.

servient to our keeping ourselves in the love of God ; for it brings before the mind, in the circumstances most calculated to make a deep impression, those truths about God which, when understood and believed, are the most powerful motives to care lest we offend him, and diligence in doing the things which are well-pleasing in his sight. If a Christian could but carry about with him always the frame of mind and heart towards God which he has when he is “praying in the Spirit,” how comparatively powerless would be the seductions and terrors of the world ; how desirous would he be to please God ; how careless about displeasing every one else, if this could not be avoided but by displeasing him ! How afraid would he be to offend him, and what a wretched bargain would the approbation and applause, the wealth and the pleasures, of the world appear, if purchased at the expense of incurring his frown !

Further, praying in the Spirit is fitted to be subservient to our keeping ourselves in the love of God ; for he has commanded us thus to pray ; and we cannot neglect any of his commands without so far forfeiting his complacent regard ; and he has constituted this prayer the appointed means of obtaining those supplies of Divine influence which are necessary to our keeping ourselves in his love, by doing the things which are good in his sight. The declaration already referred to, “For all these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them,” is connected with the promise of progressive sanctification. “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and ye shall be clean ; from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a right spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh ; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes ; and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them”—that is, ye shall keep yourselves in my love—“and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.”

This means of keeping ourselves in the love of God, and

that which we illustrated in our last discourse, are very closely connected; they act and react. "Building ourselves up on our most holy faith" naturally leads to "prayer in the Spirit." It increases the instrumentality by which the Spirit works in leading us to pray, and to pray as we ought. It raises mounds on which he may plant his enginery; furnishes arrows which, with unerring aim and resistless power, he sends into the heart. On the other hand, "praying in the Spirit" enables us to "build ourselves up on our most holy faith." "Except the Lord build that house," the holy temple founded on our most holy faith, "they labour in vain that build it." And how is the Lord's help to be secured but by enlightened, believing, fervent prayer, prayer in the Spirit? "Call on me," says he; "I will deliver." "He shall call on me; I will answer him." Thus do these two exercises mutually sustain each other; and thus are they together subservient to our "keeping ourselves in the love of God."

I thought of concluding the illustration of the subject in this discourse; but I find I must defer the consideration of "Looking to the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life," till another opportunity.

Has not what I have said been obviously and powerfully calculated to impress on the minds of Christians the importance of prayer, of prayer in the Spirit? That is a truth we are by no means sufficiently impressed with; not so impressed with as we are likely, ere long, to be. I believe the dying sentiment of that good man, Suttcliff of Olney, the friend of Andrew Fuller and of Carey, is a very common one with genuine Christians, and strongest in those who, their most intimate friends think, have least ground for it. "I wish I had prayed more." "This," says his illustrious friend, "was one of those weighty sayings which are not unfrequently uttered in view of the solemn realities of eternity. This wish has often recurred to me since his departure, as equally applicable to myself, and with it the

resolution of that holy man, President Edwards, so ‘to live as he would wish to have done when he came to die.’ In reviewing my own life, *I wish I had prayed more than I have for the success of the gospel.* I have seen enough to furnish me with matter of thankfulness; but, had I prayed more, I might have seen more. *I wish I had prayed more for the salvation of those about me, and who are given me in charge.* When the father of the lunatic doubted whether Jesus could do any thing for him, he was told in answer, That if he could believe, all things were possible. On hearing that he burst into tears, saying, ‘Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief.’ He seems to have understood our Lord as suggesting, that if the child were not healed, it would not be owing to any want of power in him, but to his own unbelief. This might well cause him to weep and exclaim as he did. The thought of his unbelief causing the death of his child was distressing. The same thought has occurred to me as applicable to the neglect of the prayer of faith. Have I not by this guilty negligence been accessory to the destruction of some that are dear to me? And were I equally concerned for the souls of my connexions, as he was for the life of his child, should I not weep with him (and pray with him)? *I wish I had prayed more than I have for my own soul.* I might then have enjoyed much more communion with God. The gospel affords the same ground for spiritual enjoyment as it did to the first Christians. *I wish I had prayed more than I have in all my undertakings.* I might then have had my steps more directed by God, and attended with fewer deviations from his will. There is no intercourse with God without prayer. It is thus that we walk with God, and have our conversation in heaven.”¹ It is thus that we “build ourselves up on our most holy faith;” thus that we “keep ourselves in the love of God.”

Let these weighty words have their appropriate influence on our minds, on our hearts, on our conduct. Let Chris-

¹ Fuller.

tians beware of “restraining prayer before God.” Let them “give themselves to prayer;” let them “watch unto prayer;” let them “continue instant in it;” let them “always pray”—that is, persevere in praying—and “not faint;” let them “pray without ceasing;” let them “pray always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit;” let them “be careful”—that is, anxious—“about nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let them make their requests known to God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep their hearts and minds by Christ Jesus.” And this is the way to holiness as well as to peace. It is by complying with this exhortation that you will be inclined to comply with that which follows it: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and any praise, think on these things. Those things which ye have both learned and received, and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of grace shall be with you.” This is to “walk so as to please God;” this is to “be followers of God as dear children;” this is to “keep ourselves in the love of God.”

Here I would close, could I but persuade myself that there are among my hearers none who do not belong to the class to whom the epistle is addressed, “The sanctified by God the Father, the preserved in Christ Jesus, and called.” But, with the utmost stretch of charity which reason will allow, I cannot indulge so pleasing a thought. There may be, I fear there are, some, it may be not a few, “who are sensual, not having the Spirit;” “natural men who receive not the things of the Spirit, to whom they are foolishness;” who are therefore prayerless, who may say prayers, but who do not, never did, cannot pray, “pray in the Spirit.” What shall I say to them?

I say, all who have the Spirit pity you. Your condition is indeed most pitiful. A body without a soul is a corpse,

tending to decomposition, loathsome, dangerous; and what is a soul without the Spirit? Spiritually dead, spiritually corrupt, spiritually loathsome, spiritually noxious. They pity you, for they were once like you. They were once "dead in trespasses and sins." They know the miseries and dangers of your condition. All who have the Spirit pray for you. They know that nothing but Divine power and grace could have quickened them; that nothing but Divine power and grace can quicken you. Their prayer is, "Come, O come from the four winds! O breath of the Lord, breathe on these dry bones that they may live!" All who are in the Spirit, and who pray in the Spirit, would earnestly wish that you *in* the Spirit were praying for the Spirit. But they know that, in your present condition, for you to employ words of prayer, asking for the Spirit, would be mockery and insult. You have no belief in the truth respecting the existence and work of the Holy Spirit. You have no sense of your need of the Holy Spirit. Supposing the existence of such a thing as his regenerating and sanctifying influence to be forced on your conviction, while your hearts remain as they are, the very last thing in the world you would wish for yourselves is, to be their subjects. It is your duty to pray, it is the duty of all men to pray,—to pray in the Spirit, to pray for the Spirit; but while you remain in unbelief, the thing is a moral impossibility. And what you would call prayer is an abomination to the Lord, intended by you as a substitute for what is your duty, your immediate duty; suggested by the enemy of souls as a means of deepening delusion; and detaining you from Him who alone can deliver from guilt, and depravity, and endless ruin.

Your duty, your immediate duty, your interest, your highest interest, is to believe the gospel. Till you do this you cannot know God as the hearer of prayer. You cannot see his throne as the throne of mercy. Its back is, as it were, turned to you, and there is a cloud on it. And do not say, I can no more believe than I can pray without the Spirit. That is most true; but it is nothing to the purpose

as an excuse for your not immediately believing. Do not say, I must wait for the Spirit. The Spirit is waiting for you. How long has he waited for some of you? Beware lest you so grieve him as that he give over waiting, and retire from you for ever. He is now striving with you. O, take care lest the awful word be uttered, 'My spirit shall strive no longer!' Then bursts forth the overwhelming deluge, then down comes the thunderbolt. You say you cannot believe. What does that mean, but that you are so stupified with the love of sense and sin, that, in opposition to the plainest statement and evidence, you will not believe the testimony of the God of truth concerning his Son, nor receive the salvation from sin which that testimony believed is ready to convey to you?

There can be no reasonable doubt of your obligation. The statement is plain, the evidence is abundant, the authority is supreme. It is your duty; your duty now. "If you do not believe, you must die in your sins." And you may die very soon, very suddenly. And as you ought to believe, since to do otherwise is to contradict the principles of your rational nature, as well as to pour contempt at once on the authority and grace of God; as you must believe, if you would not perish, perish for ever; so you *would* most certainly believe if you did not wilfully shut your eyes and stop the ears of your mind. Look at the declaration of God's law and gospel, his law condemning you, and his gospel proclaiming free forgiveness, full salvation. It is not in looking away from these things, while professing to be waiting for some operation on the mind, which shall as it were compel you to believe, that you are to be brought to the faith of the gospel. "Faith comes by hearing," by listening to, by understanding the word. Fix your mind on the truth respecting yourselves and the Saviour. Can you do this without seeing your need of him, his suitableness to you? Can you see this without gladly, gratefully accepting Him and his salvation?

Then will you have evidence, you never can have it in any other way, that the Spirit has been savingly working

on you, and that he is now in you. Then will you pray, pray in the Spirit; and God will hear your prayers, and give you larger and larger measures of this Spirit; that, “building yourselves up on your most holy faith,” you may become every day more holy and happy; that ye may “keep yourselves in the love of God,” of which, as his regenerated ones, you are the appropriate objects, “looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

SERMON IV.

ON LOOKING FOR THE MERCY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST UNTO ETERNAL LIFE.

JUDE 20, 21.—But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

THE great duty to which Christians are exhorted in these words is, “the keeping themselves in the love of God;” and the means recommended for this purpose are, “building themselves up on their most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

In the first of the three discourses which I have addressed to you from this interesting passage of Scripture, I explained to you “the Christian’s duty to keep himself in the love of God;” and, in the second and third, I illustrated the first two of the means recommended for assisting in the performance of this duty, “the building himself up on his most holy faith, and the praying in the Holy Ghost.” It only remains, to the completion of our exposition, that I turn your attention to the third exercise recommended by the Apostle as conducive to the Christian’s keeping himself in the love of God,—“The looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

This, then, is our theme. ‘If Christians would keep themselves in the love of God, they must “look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”’ All true Christians have experienced the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, his kindness, his free grace, his tender pity, towards them; from their sin utterly undeserving of, from their misery greatly needing, this mercy. It was in the exercise of this special mercy, that the only begotten of God from eternity undertook their cause; in the fulness of time appeared in their nature, charged with its responsibilities; and having, though unstained by its sinfulness, by his obedience unto death, fully satisfied the demands of the Divine law on their behalf, assumed that unlimited sovereignty assigned him by his Father, the righteous Judge, as the reward of his having, at such a cost of generous labour and suffering, reconciled the exercise of mercy with the claims of justice; in the exercise of which, under the influence of his unchanging, unchangeable mercy, he will put them all in possession of complete unending happiness, giving eternal life to all whom the Father has given him. Every one of those who has been brought out of his natural state of condemnation, into a state of judicial forgiveness and paternal favour; every one of them who has been delivered from the reigning power of that depravity, which is, and must be, the object of the Divine abhorrence, and formed to that character of true holiness, which is, and must be, the object of the Divine complacency, owes this to “the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is Christ who, in his mercy, sends forth his Spirit, to produce that faith in the sinner by which he is “interested in the justifying efficacy of his atoning sacrifice, and becomes the proper subject of the sanctifying and comforting influence of the truth as it is in him.” All true Christians have thus obtained “the mercy of the Lord Jesus;” they have had a satisfactory manifestation of his mercy, his distinguishing mercy, to them; they have “tasted that the Lord is gracious.” From that mercy they have received much; but from that mercy

they are warranted, encouraged, commanded, to expect more. It is to the duty of the Christian, in cherishing these expectations of farther manifestations of the mercy of the Lord Jesus, and to the influence which the discharge of this duty is calculated to have on "our keeping ourselves in the love of God," that our attention must be turned in the remaining part of the discourse.

The general statement of the Apostle is, that Christians should "look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." This is equivalent to a statement that Christians, having experienced the mercy, the free grace, the tender compassion, of the Lord Jesus Christ, having "tasted that their Lord is gracious," should cherish an humble, confident expectation, that they shall receive from him continued manifestations of his mercy, in the communication of blessings suited to their circumstances; all of them introductory to, preparatory for, that final state of absolute perfection in holiness and happiness which is termed "eternal life," to which he is ultimately to bring them, and in which his infinite mercy will be as fully expressed towards them as their limited natures admit. All this is obviously included in these pregnant words,—“Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

We must endeavour to break down this magnificent thought into its component parts, that we may the more distinctly perceive its meaning and feel its power :—
I. (1.) Christians should look for eternal life; (2.) They should look for it as the result of mercy; (3.) Of the mercy of the Lord Jesus. II. And till they obtain this "eternal life," "the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory," they should look to that same mercy, which is thus to crown at last, for all that is necessary for them till the period of bestowing on them eternal life arises, for all that is necessary to preserve them to, and prepare them for, its enjoyment. Such is the hope and expectation which the Christian, in the passage, is enjoined to cherish. After a few remarks, illustrative of the objects and grounds of this hope, I shall

shut up my illustrations of the passage, by showing how the holding fast the confidence and mercy of this hope is fitted to be subservient to enable Christians to comply with the leading injunction in the text,—“Keep yourselves in the love of God.”

Our first remark, then, is, Christians should look for “eternal life.” Life, eternal life, is not unfrequently used in Scripture to denote that state of spiritual being into which men enter, when they believe the gospel, in contrast with the state in which they are by nature. As when our Lord says, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him who sent me, hath everlasting life,” “is passed from death to life.” “Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life;” “I give unto my sheep eternal life.” “God,” says the Apostle John, “hath given to us eternal life.” Eternal life is, in these passages, spoken of as something which the Christian already possesses, something that belongs to him as a Christian, something received in believing.

The term is, however, also often employed to denote that state into which the Christian is to enter after the general judgment. After the final sentence has been pronounced, the righteous are said to go into “life eternal.” They who have made sacrifices for Christ, are said to be recompensed in various ways “in this time;” but, “in the world to come,” they are to receive “eternal life.” And, when God “renders to every man according to his works,” it is said that “then” he will render “eternal life” “to them who, by a constant continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality.” There can be no doubt, that it is in the last of these references that the phrase is employed in the passage before us; and that it is descriptive of the last and most perfect state of the saved; of what the Apostle Peter calls, “the salvation laid up in heaven,” “the grace to be brought to Christians at the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

We have thus fixed the reference of the expression. But

what is its meaning? What is the truth about that state which is meant to be presented before the mind, when it is called "Life, eternal life?" It has been common to say, that death is figuratively used for misery, and that eternal death is just equivalent to eternal misery; that life is figuratively used for happiness, and that eternal life is just equivalent to eternal happiness. But this is not satisfactory. A state of eternal death is a state of eternal misery, and a state of eternal life is a state of eternal happiness; but the one is a state of misery because it is a state of death, the other is a state of happiness because it is a state of life. The question is, what is that death, what is that life, the perfection and perpetuity of which constitute absolute misery or absolute happiness?

The most general notion we can form of life, is the capacity of action and enjoyment. The more any being is capable of action and enjoyment suited to its nature, the more life has it. God is the Living One; that is the leading idea when he is said to be "a Spirit;" he is "the Eternal Life," eternally possessed of infinite capacities of action and enjoyment. Man was originally created "in the image of God," as a living being, "a spirit," capable of action, capable of enjoyment. Man's peculiar nature is constituted by a union of the material and the immaterial. His body is a piece of organized matter, which is animated by an immaterial principle, possessed of various capacities or faculties of action and enjoyment,—some of them possessed in common with the lower animals; others of them, though still referring merely to "things seen and temporal," of a kind greatly superior to the endowments of mere animals; and some of them of a higher kind still, connecting him with the invisible and the infinite, with God and eternity.

In man's nature, as it came from the hand of God, the higher principles of his life possessed the control of the lower; the animal and the merely rational being subordinated to the spiritual. To adopt the Apostle's arrangement of the constituents of human nature, "the soul" animated

and ruled "the body;" "the spirit," that which connected him with God, as it were, animated and ruled "the soul."

The functions of life, with regard to the highest faculties of man's nature, were activities and enjoyments having God for their immediate object; with regard to the intermediate faculties, activities and enjoyments of intellect and affection, having for their object the things which God has made; with regard to the lower faculties, activities and enjoyments of an animal kind, of which the material portion of man was the instrument. Every one of these classes of capacities or species of life, had its own appropriate activities and enjoyments; and, in the full harmonious exercise of these faculties on their appropriate objects, man would have manifested his complex life, and found his appropriate happiness; and, while this continued, life and happiness would have continued; and it would seem, from the capacity of improvement which belongs to human nature in almost all its faculties, would have constantly increased.

Man sinned; and by sin death came into the world, and passed on all men. The death of man is twofold, referring to him both as a rational animal and as a spiritual being. The immediate principle of animal life is the soul, and the withdrawment of it from the body is natural death. Innocent man was immortal; man the sinner is mortal. His animal frame is liable to disease, and pain, and decay, in an endless variety of forms; and, after a few short years, a dissolution of the connexion between soul and body takes place, and the material portion of man, by a process peculiarly revolting to the imagination, is resolved into its elements,—the dust returning to the dust, as it was. Man, as an animal, becomes thus utterly incapable of activity or enjoyment; and this state, but for the restorative dispensation, it would seem must have been perpetual.

The principle of spiritual life is the Spirit of God influencing the higher powers of our immortal nature, and producing activities and enjoyments of which God is the object. The innocent spirit of man, though an humble habitation for

the Divine Spirit, was yet not an unsuitable one ; and He was not disposed to be “as a stranger, tarrying only for a night.” But man, under the influence of the Evil Spirit, wickedly, madly, basely, expelled the heavenly visitant ; and He withdrew, as it became his insulted majesty and kindness. Man was now spiritually dead. The rational spirit, having withdrawn itself from the source of spiritual life, became spiritually lifeless, dead while it lived. Separated from Him who is “the life,” its faculties, now influenced and regulated by the propensities and appetites of the animal frame ; by the world, that is, things seen and temporal, animate and inanimate ; and by the god of the world and his subordinate agent,—however active otherwise, were powerless as to spiritual good ; and its sensibilities, however acute otherwise, callous as to spiritual enjoyment. A spiritual and moral decomposition, more revolting than that putrefaction which is the result of natural death, takes place ; and as the soul, from its nature, is immortal, it retires farther and farther from God, and sinks deeper and deeper in delusion and error, and depravity and wretchedness, for ever. In the absence of the Divine Spirit, there may be, there is, a species of bestial life, a species of diabolical life, a life like that of the lower animals, a life like that of the fallen angels ; but the Divine life, the life of God, is not, cannot be there. This is the death of the soul, this is spiritual death ; and, but for the restorative dispensation, this too must, in the case of every human being, have been everlasting.

The state of double death into which sin has thus brought man, to every created intelligence, on being put in possession of the facts, must appear hopeless. The ruin of the body and of the soul would seem equally irretrievable. But the Living One cannot only give but restore life. He cannot only “call the things that be not as if they were,” but he can “raise the dead.”

In the case of man, however, this cannot be done by a mere act of omnipotence. Death in both its forms is a penal evil. It takes place in accordance with the principles

of God's righteous moral government, which are just the expression of the perfections of his holy moral nature ; and man cannot be restored to life till justice is satisfied, and law magnified, by a display of the evil of sin, fully equivalent, in the way of answering all the purpose of God's holy moral government, to the permanent infliction of the penalty of death on those who have deserved it.

Created intelligence and power could never have discovered or carried into effect what could accomplish this object. This has, however, been realized in the incarnation and atonement of the Only-begotten of God, who took away sin by the sacrifice of himself, died the just in the room of the unjust, as the lamb of God bore and bore away the sins of the world, and "by dying destroyed death." This was a sacrifice "so rich and fragrant, so full of value and grateful savour, as that by it abundant recompense was made for the wrong man had done to the Majesty of heaven ; an injury to which the creation consuming would have been a disproportionate sacrifice ; but the sacrifice of himself, the Immanuel God-man, was both suitable and adequate to the exigency of the case, being the sacrifice of him who was man, therefore suitable to the offence of man ; being the sacrifice of him who was God, and therefore equal to the wrong done to God."¹ A deep and broad foundation was thus laid for the restoration of life to man. And all who in the appointed way, the faith of the truth, are interested in this great atonement, obtain deliverance from their double death, and are put in possession, in the appointed order, of the two species of life which they had forfeited.

In the case of all the saved, the Holy Spirit, sent in consequence of the atonement made by the Saviour, by an agency on the mind which we cannot understand, but which for potency the Apostle Paul compares to the energy by which Christ was raised from the dead, quickens the dead soul, producing faith in it ; that is, leading it to understand

¹ Howe.

and believe the truth respecting the Divine character, unites it to the Saviour, "creates it anew in him" in "the image of God," makes it "a new creature," brings it into a new creation, communicates a new life which admits of indefinite increase, and which, though liable to partial decay, is not only incapable of extinction, but secured of an endless ever-expanding development in spiritual activities and spiritual enjoyments. When men, under Divine influence, believe, "they pass from death to life;" and in reference to this life it is said they shall never die. The source of that life is in them a well of living water springing up into everlasting life. Living in the Spirit, they walk in the Spirit; they through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body; they have joy in the Holy Ghost; they have an inner life, whose appropriate enjoyments are independent of things seen and temporal; and, while their outward man decays, their inward man is strengthened day by day.

The law of mortality is not repealed in reference to these favoured ones. The life of God, in them, is incapable of death; but the life which directly animates their material frames is a mortal life. All of them must die, and see corruption. But when "the end cometh," "the last enemy," physical death, "shall be destroyed." The bodies of the saved shall be raised powerful, glorious, incorruptible, and immortal; and these living bodies shall become the meet habitations of their living spirits; and, delivered from death in every form and degree, the nations of the saved shall reign in life by Christ Jesus, with Christ Jesus for ever and ever.

This is the account which the Apostle gives of those to whom "there is no condemnation, being in Christ Jesus," who is "set forth a propitiation in his blood;" and who, on the ground of that propitiation, are "made free, by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, from the law of sin and death." With regard to them, Christ is in them, and they are in Christ; "their body is dead," it is mortal, it must die, "because of sin," the first sin of the first man; "but the

spirit is life," the soul is quickened, made capable of spiritual activity and spiritual enjoyment, it is made truly holy and happy in God ; and " he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also" at the appointed time, in the due order, " quicken their mortal bodies by," or rather because, of " his Spirit dwelling in them." The bodies, which are the purchase of the Saviour's blood, and the place of the Spirit's abode in the souls which dwell in them, shall, according to their nature, be put in possession of the life, in which, in reference to the saved, " mortality is to be swallowed up."

With regard to those who are not interested in the Christian salvation, dead in trespasses and sins, they never see life, their souls become as it were twice dead ; and, though their bodies are to be raised up, it is not to the resurrection of life, but to the resurrection of condemnation, to be " cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death."

" The eternal life," spoken of in the passage under consideration, plainly denotes the state which is to be the ultimate state of the saints ; a state in which no change but that of indefinite regular progression shall take place for ever. It brings it before our minds as a state in which there is no death, no feebleness, no decay, no termination ; a state of unmixed life, where all the powers and capacities which belong to human nature, all the powers that can be possessed by such embodied spirits, all the powers of intellect, and affection, and action, and enjoyment, shall be possessed and exerted in the best possible manner ; a state of perfect, holy happiness, in entire conformity to the character and will of him who liveth for ever and ever, the Holy, Holy, Holy One, the ever-blessed God ; a thinking along with him, choosing along with him, willing along with him, acting along with him, being like him ; a partaking of his holiness, his happiness, his life ; a being holy as he is holy, happy as he is happy, full of life as he is full of life. And it brings this state before the mind also as one that shall continue for ever ; when God dies they may die, but

not all men. This, then, is the ultimate object of the Christian's hope.

For this he is to look. — "Looking for eternal life," is an expression which naturally suggests three ideas. Counting it certain, habitually thinking of it, earnestly desiring it.

The Christian should look for eternal life as something that is absolutely certain. He should reckon the existence of such a state absolutely certain. The world thinks of such a state as an airy dream. But the Christian ought, and, so far as he acts in character, the Christian does, regard that future state as certain as, and far more real than, the state of things which at present exists. His faith is — confidence in reference to things hoped for, conviction with regard to things not seen." It is indeed strange that such a state should remain for men who are spiritually dead, and who must all submit to natural death; but it is the most reasonable of all things to believe it, for the living God, "God who cannot lie, has promised it." Nothing in the scriptural revelation is more frequently and more clearly stated, than the existence of such a state. It is, and it ought to be, one of "the things most surely believed" among Christians; and, as all doubts in reference to it are most unreasonable, so are they fitted to be injurious to the Christian's best interests.

But the Christian is to look for eternal life, not only as certain in itself, but as certain to him. He is to look for it as something which he is himself to enjoy. The promise of eternal life to the believer is just as certain as the revelation that there will be eternal life. Can any words be plainer than the words of our Lord, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all, and none shall pluck them out of my Father's hand." The Christian man, who is giving all diligence to "make his calling and election sure, by," under the influence of the faith of the gospel, "adding to his faith virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly

kindness, charity," cannot too confidently reckon on "an abundant entrance being ministered to him into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." It is only, however, in the faith of the truth, and yielding to its sanctifying influence, that such confidence can be legitimately or safely maintained. Every sinful feeling and action is calculated to shake this confidence; for it is a proof that the ground on which it alone can safely rest, "our own most holy faith," the testimony of God, is out of the mind's view. It is in "a constant continuance in well-doing," produced by habitual faith, that the Christian is to look for that "eternal life" which is "the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Christian is not only to count eternal life a thing absolutely certain, certain to him, but he is to make it the subject of habitual earnest consideration. He must "mind the things which are above, where Christ sits at God's right hand." If his faith is enlightened and firm as to eternal life, it must occupy many of his thoughts. It is impossible for a man to hope for a thing, but he will be thinking of it. There is no looking *for* the things unseen and eternal, without looking *at* them.

And still farther, this looking for eternal life implies earnest desires for it. The soul, living by the new life communicated by the Spirit, is "burdened," both with a "mortal body" and "a body of sin and death," with which it is closely connected; and, though naturally shrinking from dissolution, is more than "willing to be unclothed." Knowing that, till the mortal body is put off, the body of sin will not be got rid of, and that death is the way to eternal life in both of its constituent parts, perfect spiritual life and perfect natural life, the language of his heart is, "O, when shall I come and appear before God!" With him is "the fountain of life." When shall I escape from this "congregation of the dead," at best of the "half quickened?" When shall "that which is perfect come, and that which is in part be done away?" When shall I be "like God, seeing him as he is?"

When shall “this mortal put on immortality?” When “shall death be swallowed up of life?”

While the Christian is thus to look for eternal life, he is to look for it as the result of *mercy*. “By grace are we saved.” “Eternal life is,” not the wages of merit, but “the gift” of mercy. “Death is the wages of sin, but eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The Christian knows he deserves hell, and that he never can deserve any thing else, but he trusts to mercy, sovereign mercy, for eternal life; and he does not trust the less confidently on this account, for he knows that God is rich in mercy, that he takes pleasure in those who trust in his mercy, and that he has said, “Mercy shall be built up for ever.” This is his first hope, this is his last hope. “You are going to receive your reward,” said one to a very good man, full of good works, on his death-bed; “I am going,” said he in reply, “to find mercy.”

And the Christian not only looks on his receiving eternal life as the result of mercy generally, but as the result of “the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He knows that with Christ he has directly to do, and with God only in him, through him. The Father has given his chosen to the Son, and has given him all power in heaven and in earth, that he may give eternal life to them. His love, his mercy, had, at an infinite expense of labour and suffering, opened the way which sin had shut up to this eternal life appointed for them before the foundation of the world; and therefore they may well trust him for doing what must be so congenial to his generous compassionate heart, the bringing them into the full enjoyment of this eternal life; the putting them in possession of “the salvation that is in him with eternal glory.”

But the Christian is not only to look for eternal life as the grand ultimate result of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ; he is to look to the same mercy for all the blessings that are needful previous to, and preparatory for, the full enjoyment of “eternal life.” This idea, as well as the former, is

obviously included in the words, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." The Christian is not to receive "eternal life," in the full extent of meaning belonging to these words, till the coming of our Lord Jesus. But he is not to wait till then for manifestations of "the mercy of the Lord Jesus." He has already tasted that he is gracious, and he is to expect from the same exuberant fountain every needful blessing till he receives the crown of eternal life. He has obtained "spiritual life;" but, without the constant exercise of the mercy of the Lord Jesus, that life would soon be extinguished. The murderer from the beginning would deprive him of life as he did his primogenitor; the pestilential elements of this evil world, and the infection of the disease which is consuming its inhabitants, would destroy it; nay, such is the madness that is in him, "that is, in his flesh," that, left to himself, he would commit spiritual suicide. But he must trust in the mercy of the Lord Jesus, and believe in his gracious declarations, "Sin shall not have dominion over you. I have overcome the world; this is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith. I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not." "Satan shall be bruised under your feet shortly." When difficulties appear insurmountable, when duties seem impracticable, when sufferings seem insupportable, he must trust in him who says, "My grace is sufficient for thee: my strength shall be perfected in weakness." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "Fear not, I am with thee." "I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee." He must trust that he will "deliver him from every evil work, and preserve him blameless to his kingdom and glory."

And when "the mortal body must die because of sin," still he must "look to the mercy of the Lord Jesus." He must in his last moments commit his parting Spirit into HIS hands who has redeemed it, and consign his body to the grave, in the full assurance that the mercy of the Lord Jesus will in due time bring it up again, knowing whom he has believed, and persuaded that he will keep that which he has

committed to him against that day. He must die, trusting that the Saviour will give his soul a hearty welcome to the resting-place of the just, and “looking for the Lord Jesus from heaven to change his vile body, and fashion it like unto his own glorious body.” He must, in a word, “look for the mercy of the Lord Jesus,” manifesting itself in his coming “the second time without sin to his salvation,” bringing his happy spirit with him, re-establishing its union with its raised, powerful, glorious, spiritual body, acknowledging him as his in the presence of an assembled universe ; and solemnly, in the exercise of mercy reigning through righteousness, adjudging him to the full possession of life in the holy activities and enjoyments of which perfected humanity is capable. The mercy of Christ has now consummated the happiness of its object ; and it only remains to trust that the mercy which has made that happiness complete will make it permanent, that perfect life shall be eternal life. Such is the Christian’s duty, “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

In conclusion, let us now, in a few sentences, show how this hope in Christ, this looking for his mercy unto eternal life, is calculated to be subservient to “our keeping ourselves in the love of God.” The honour that is done to our Lord Jesus, when we entirely confide in his power, and wisdom, and faithfulness, and kindness, when we “look for,” expect, “his mercy unto eternal life,” is and must be well-pleasing to his Father, who is well pleased in him, who intrusts him with all that concerns his glory, and who delights to honour him ; and whose declared will is, that all should honour the Son as they honour himself. Nothing displeases the Father more than dishonour done to the Son. Nothing is more fitted to keep us in his love than showing our confidence in “his servant whom he upholds, his elect in whom his soul delights.”

The mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ is, indeed, the mercy of God ; for “God is in Christ Jesus.” Distrust in his mercy is peculiarly dishonouring and displeasing to God. “The

fearful and unbelieving" are among the objects of his special disapprobation ; while, on the other hand, "the eye of the Lord is on," that is, rests complacently on, "them that fear him, that hope in his mercy." The more generous any being is, the more does he delight in being trusted, and the more does he love those who trust in him.

Confidence in the mercy of Jesus Christ, as securing to us every necessary blessing, excites gratitude, which naturally expresses itself in that obedience which is necessary to our keeping ourselves in the love of God.

It arms against temptation to act in a way which would prevent us from keeping ourselves in the love of God. What can the world promise better than what the mercy of the Lord Jesus will bestow ? What can the world threaten against which the mercy of the Lord Jesus cannot defend ? "Hope" is "the helmet of salvation."

Finally, when we consider the nature of the ultimate blessing which the Christian is looking for from the mercy of our Lord Jesus, we will see that this exercise has a direct and powerful tendency to enable us to keep ourselves in the love of God, by cultivating universal holiness. For what is that eternal life which we look for, but just perfect happiness in perfect holiness ? If that be the great object of our hope, contemplation, and desire, present holiness of heart and life must be the result. What says the Apostle John ? "Now are we the sons of God ; but it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him." The life we shall participate with him is eternal life ; "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is ;" perfectly, experimentally know him ; and "to know him is eternal life." Now, mark what follows : "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure." Every one who "looks for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life," will, just in the degree in which he does so, "keep himself in the love of God ;" for "looking for this blessed hope" deepens the lesson taught by "the grace of God," "the mercy of the Lord Jesus," to "deny

ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world." Having the promise of eternal life, understanding and believing it, we cannot but "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God;" thus "doing what is well-pleasing in his sight," and "keeping ourselves in his love." "Hope to the end, for the grace which is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ," is one of the means prescribed by the Apostle Peter for enabling us, "not to fashion ourselves according to our former lusts in our ignorance, but to be holy as he who has called us is holy, holy in all manner of conversation." And the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews calls on Christians to "give all diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end, that they may not be slothful, but followers of them who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises."

Thus have I completed the plan laid before you, when we entered on the consideration of this subject. The discourses have all of them been, from the nature of the subject, practical, and much exhortation has been mingled with the exposition. Formal application is therefore felt to be unnecessary. I conclude with the prayer, that all "the sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Christ Jesus, and called among us," may have their "pure minds stirred up by these remembrances," and be enabled to "keep themselves in the love of God."

But how can I close without saying something to those, some of whom, I doubt not, are in this audience, who, if they were aware of their true state, could not help seeing, that not only in the vista of their futurity is the spectre death, sometimes seeming to approach, then to retire, but always keeping the middle of the path, so that there is no passing him; but that beyond him in the distance, closing the prospect, is an object more terrific still,—not eternal life, but everlasting destruction; and who have nothing to look to, for any thing good, in the mean time, but the patience, the long-suffering of God, which they have madly presumed

on, fearfully insulted, which will not continue for ever, and which may even now be all but exhausted?

But what shall I say to you who are in these circumstances? Continuing in impenitence and sin, I can bid you hope for no good. I can promise you no blessing. I bid you fear, and tell you, you cannot fear the worst; the evil to be feared is worse than your most fearful apprehensions of it. But why should you continue impenitent and unbelieving? There is mercy, mercy for you, if you will but receive it in the only way God can bestow it or you enjoy it, through the mediation of his Son, in the faith of the truth.

The King of Israel is a merciful King; merciful even to the rebellious. He has received gifts for such, and he is ready to bestow them. He still receives sinners. Come to him, believing the testimony of the Father respecting his grace. Cast yourself on his mercy. He is rich in mercy. He waits to be gracious. Jesus is now passing by. He is very near you, in the word of the truth of the gospel which we preach. Oh! if you but knew the truth about yourself and him, you could not help crying like the poor blind man, in earnest desire and humble hope, "Jesus, Son of David, Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me;" and, though men should attempt to make you hold your peace, you would, like him, but cry so much the more "Jesus, Son of David, Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me." And do you think he would lend a deaf ear to such a cry? Oh, no; "Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Full of compassion, He would say, "Be it to thee according to thy faith. Thou hast found mercy. Go in peace;" and henceforth, amid all the trials, and struggles, and sorrows of life, "Look for my mercy unto eternal life."

Oh! how happy, how secure, is he who has thus found mercy of the Lord! Hear his own declaration. "The mountains may depart, the hills may be removed," the earth may be burned up, and the heavens depart as a scroll when it is rolled together; "but my loving-kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace

be removed, saith the Lord God, who hath mercy on thee."

Remain despisers of his mercy, and what must be the consequence? The death of the body finding you in this state—and how soon, how suddenly may it lay hold on you!—will convey you into a region where the death of the soul becomes fixed, immutable, eternal; a state in which there is no mercy to those who, in the time of their visitation, despised and abused mercy, but where justice has free course and is glorified; a state in which "He who made you can have no mercy on you, and he that formed you can show you no favour" for ever. Life and death are before you; make your choice, make it now. Is there room for halting between two opinions here?

Think not of obtaining salvation in any way but through "the mercy of our Lord Jesus." You never can have it from the Divine justice; mere justice can never award you any thing but condemnation and punishment, for you deserve these and never can deserve any thing else. Think not of obtaining it even from the Divine mercy, apart from our Lord Jesus Christ. That mercy is indeed infinite, but it cannot be displayed but in consistency with justice; and it can, in consistency with justice, find its way to you only through the channel of Christ's atonement. It is "in Christ that God is reconciling the world to himself." All that the mercy of God can do for sinful men, all that his omnipotent love can bestow on them, is done and offered "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Life, hope, happiness, are here, here alone, to be found. He that believes the testimony of God hath the Son. "He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son shall never see life;" "HE abideth in death," and "the wrath of God abideth on HIM" for ever.

ON THE MINISTRY OF OUR LORD:

ITS DETAILS AND ITS RESULTS.

A LECTURE,

**DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE ANNUAL SESSION OF
THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE UNITED
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AUGUST 3, 1847.**

LECTURE.

ON THE DETAILS AND RESULTS OF THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF JESUS CHRIST.

THIS introductory discourse will be occupied with a few remarks on our Lord's ministry, the perfect exemplar of that ministry, to prepare you for which is the great object of this institution, on the annual labours of which we are under auspices peculiarly favourable once more entering. These remarks will be founded on the concluding paragraph of the twelfth chapter of the gospel by John (v. 37-50); and you will find it an advantage to open your Greek New Testaments at that place, and keep them open during the lecture.

The rejection of Jesus Christ by the great body of his countrymen, the Jews, is a fact which, at first view, may seem to throw suspicion on the justness of his claims to a Divine mission, as indicating that the evidence adduced in their support did not serve its purpose with those to whom it was originally presented; and who, in some points of view, were placed in circumstances peculiarly favourable for forming a correct estimate of its validity. It may be supposed, that had the proofs of his Divine mission and Messiahship been as strong and striking as the friends of Christianity represent them, the prejudices of the Jews, powerful as they unquestionably were, must have given way before them;

and the believers of his doctrines have been at least as numerous as the witnesses of his miracles. Such a supposition, though plausible, argues, on the part of its supporters, imperfect and incorrect views of the human constitution, intellectual and moral, in its present fallen state, as well as ignorance or misapprehension of the facts of the case under consideration.

That the evidence which our Lord adduced, in support of his claims, was not invincible, is satisfactorily proved by the fact of his rejection by his countrymen ; but this character of resistibility, the evidence in favour of Christianity, possesses in common with the evidence of all the principles of natural and revealed religion, in common, indeed, with the evidence of much historical and all moral truth. I know of no obligation under which the Divinity can be considered as lying, to accompany any revelation he may be pleased to make with such a kind or measure of evidence as shall compel the assent of all to whom it is addressed. It is surely enough if it bring along with it such a kind and measure of evidence as is sufficient to satisfy the candid enquiring mind ; and he who is aware of the nature, extent, and power of human depravity and Jewish prejudice ; of the spiritual, pure, and humbling character of the doctrines of Jesus ; of the entire revolution in character and conduct, in thought, feeling, and action, which the enlightened and cordial reception of these doctrines involved ; and of the serious sacrifice of worldly interest, in every view of it which such a reception inferred, on the part of the Jewish believer—will by no means be surprised that, in opposition to the strongest evidence of a moral kind, many of his countrymen should have rejected him ; and will rather be disposed, with the writers of the New Testament, to trace it to supernatural influence, that any of them in these circumstances cordially received him.

Though to an intelligent, well informed, reflecting mind, there is thus in the rejection of our Lord by the great body of his countrymen nothing unaccountable, and, indeed, no-

thing wonderful but that depth of moral depravity which it implies, of which we may well say,—

“Were not this common, would it not be strange?
That 'tis so common, sure, is stranger still?”

the Jews, in reality, having done nothing but what any portion of unregenerate men in any country or any age would have done, if placed in similar circumstances; yet still to superficial thinkers, and the great majority of mankind belong to that class, the fact of our Lord's rejection by his countrymen does wear the appearance of a formidable objection against the divinity of his mission; or, at any rate, against the sufficiency of the evidence by which his claim to such a mission was sought to be established. On such persons the satisfactory argument, the outline of which we have just traced, can make little impression. They have neither the information, nor the habits of thought, that are requisite to master it; and in many cases they are little disposed to devote to their acquisition the necessary time and mental labour.

To such persons it may, perhaps, be of more use to turn their attention to the palpable and demonstrable fact, that the rejection of the Messiah by the great body of his countrymen was the subject of very distinct prediction by the Old Testament prophets; and that therefore the universal reception of Jesus by the Jews, which they insist on as the most satisfactory evidence of his Divine mission, would have been, in the circumstances of the case, clear proof that he was not, that he could not be, he who, though come in the name of the Lord to save, was to be “despised and rejected of men,” “a reproach of men, and despised of the people.” What they hold to be necessary to prove his Divine mission, would have, indeed, completely disproved it. Numerous are the passages in the volume of the book of prophecy, in which the Messiah is represented as a sufferer, a sufferer from his own countrymen; and therefore no conclusion can be more direct than this:—Had Jesus not suffered, suffered

from his countrymen, he could not have been the Messiah. Thus, what at first view to superficial minds seems a presumption against Christianity, on close examination assumes the form of a conclusive argument in its favour. When the heathens in the first ages of Christianity, urged, as they probably did, the unbelief of the Jews as an objection against the truth of that religion, its primitive teachers had but to point them to the Old Testament prophets, and say, “Thus it was written, that Christ should suffer;” and had he not suffered, had he not thus suffered, we should have had one argument fewer that he was indeed the Christ; nay, we should have wanted the means of giving symmetry and completeness to our moral demonstration, that in Jesus “we have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write.” The answer would have been a satisfactory and unanswerable one, and the reply is as appropriate to the modern sceptic or infidel as to the ancient heathens. It may well appear strange and lamentable, that when the Messiah came to his own territories,¹ his own people² did not receive him, and that his wonderful and gracious miracles made so little impression on them; but the more strange an event is, it is the more surprising that it should be predicted; and the exactness of the fulfilment of the prediction, tends the more to remove every suspicion of imposture from a considerate mind. It is a striking consideration, that, in their very rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, his unbelieving countrymen were unconsciously furnishing additional evidence that he was indeed the person they denied him to be. What a wonderful illustration of the Psalmist's devout reflection, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee!” I have been led into this train of remark by noticing that the Evangelist John, in that interesting paragraph to which I am about to call your attention, finds in the Old Testament predictions, respecting the rejection of the Messiah by his countrymen, an antidote to such suspi-

¹ *Εἰς τὰ ἴδια.*² *Οἱ ἴδιοι.*

cions, as the fact of our Lord's rejection, taken by itself, might not unnaturally suggest ; and shows that what seemed fitted to shake into dissolution the whole magnificent fabric of our Lord's claims, in reality but settles it more immovably on its solid foundation.

The paragraph, though an unusually long one, has one subject—the ministry of our Lord. It brings this ministry before our minds in its details and in its results : its details, in the message he delivered, and the credentials he presented ; the claims he made, and the vouchers he exhibited ; the doctrine he taught, and the evidence he gave of its truth :—its results, in the hardened disbelief of the great body of his countrymen, and the cowardly silence of the small minority who were constrained inwardly to admit the justice of his claims, and the force of the evidence in their support ; the first of these strange results, the hardened unbelief of the multitude, being accounted for by that blindness of mind and hardness of heart which had been the subject of Old Testament prophecy ; and the second, the dastardly concealment of conviction, on the part of a portion of the better informed and upper classes, by that worldly-mindedness which leads men to prefer the suggestions of interest to the dictates of conscience, and the praise of men to the approbation of God ; while in both these results, so melancholy in themselves, so threatening in their aspect, to the final success of the Christian cause, and so different from what we might have been disposed to anticipate, is found, when viewed in the light of ancient oracles, a corroboration of the claims which they seemed calculated to invalidate. This is the substance of the paragraph, and the remaining part of the lecture will be occupied in the development of the various important thoughts which are folded up in the abstract I have endeavoured to give of its contents.

The paragraph itself is of a peculiar, I had almost said unique, structure and character. The history of our Lord's public ministry is closed. It terminates in the verse immediately preceding our text. The account of his

private interviews with his friends, previously to his passion, is about to commence. It begins with the first verse of the following chapter. One scene in the eventful history is closed, another is about to open. The curtain is, as it were, falling before the theatre on which the public acts of Jesus was performed, and the Evangelist is about to conduct us into the sacred circle of his disciples, and communicate to us the awakening, sublime, consoling conversations which the Redeemer, full of love, had with them before his final departure. But before he does this he makes a pause in the narrative, and, as it were, looks back and around; and, in the paragraph before us, presents us in a few sentences with a brief but very comprehensive view of all that our Lord had taught and done during the course of his public ministry, and of the effects which his discourses and miracles had produced on the minds of the great body of his countrymen; connecting with this an equally brief but satisfactory account of the true cause why such doctrines, accompanied by such evidence, instead of being universally received and openly professed, had been generally discredited; and why conviction, even where it had been reluctantly yielded, had been unworthily concealed, "held," to use the Apostle's striking expression,¹ "held," confined "in unrighteousness." Such pauses in the narrative, such interposed brief reviews (*resumés*, as the French call them), are not uncommon among profane historians. This is, I believe, the only instance of the kind in the evangelical history, and I do not recollect more than two instances of a similar kind in the Old Testament history; the short reviews given, by the inspired writers of the Second Book of Kings, and the Second Book of Chronicles, of the history of God's mercies to Israel and Judah, and of their ingratitude and disobedience, previously to entering on the narrative of the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, in which this ingratitude and disobedience found merited punishment.²

¹ *Εν αδικία κρατούται*. Rom. i. 18.

² 2 Kings xvii. 7-23. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14-17.

Instead of examining exegetically the verses as they stand, I shall take up in succession the two great subjects which they bring before our minds, our Lord's ministry and its consequences; or, to speak more accurately perhaps, the two aspects of the one great object they present to us, THE MINISTRY OF OUR LORD IN ITS DETAILS AND IN ITS RESULTS. The following is the account of the DETAILS of our Lord's ministry, his words and his works.¹ We are told *what* he *said*. We have a very condensed abridgement of his doctrine from the 44th to the 50th verse. We are told *how* he *said* it.² "He cried and said," he said it publicly, earnestly, and fearlessly. We are told what he *did*, verse 37.³ He did miracles, great miracles, many great miracles, and he did them publicly "before them." This is the account of our Lord's ministry in its details. This was his message, these his credentials, these were his claims, these his vouchers. This was his doctrine, and this the evidence in support of it. As to its RESULTS, we are told (verse 37-41), that the great body of those who heard his doctrines and witnessed his miracles, did not believe on him; and their unbelief is accounted for, and we are informed (verse 42, 43), that a considerable portion of the chief rulers were convinced of the justice of his claims, but declined to acknowledge them, and their unworthy cowardice is accounted for, also.

PART I.

OF THE DETAILS OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY.

Let us first, then, consider the view here given us of the details of our Lord's ministry. Our attention is here called to three things. The doctrines he taught; the manner in which he taught them; and the miracles by which he confirmed them.

¹ Παιτα, as Luke has it, *ὡς ηἰξάτο ὁ Ἰησοῦς ποιεῖν τε καὶ διδάξαι*.

² Ἐκραξὶ καὶ ἔειπεν.

³ Ταῦτα σημεῖα τεύχει, ἑμπεσθεῖν αὐτῶν.

§ 1. *The doctrines he taught.*

The summary of his doctrines is as follows: "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him who sent me; and he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness; and if any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day: for I have not spoken of myself, but the Father which hath sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."

That these words are not the record of a statement made consecutively by our Lord on some particular occasion, but an abridged statement by the Evangelist of our Lord's doctrines, in his own words, uttered at different times and on different occasions, seems all but absolutely certain. At the 36th verse we are told, that, having uttered the impressive words contained in that and the preceding verse, "he departed," apparently finally, refraining henceforth from all public intercourse with his unbelieving countrymen, "and hid himself" from them. The words before us cannot without extreme violence be considered either as having been uttered immediately after those recorded in the 35th and 36th verses, before he retired finally from public intercourse with the Jews, or as having been spoken to his disciples in private. Nothing can be more unnatural than to suppose, that after John had recorded a discourse which seems to come to a natural close, and then stated, that on having said these things Jesus departed and hid himself, and then entered on an account of the reasons of the little success of our Lord's ministry; nothing can be more unnatural than to suppose

he should then introduce, without any intimation, what had formed the concluding part of our Lord's discourse; nothing can be more unnatural than this, except to hold the second supposition, that it is to a private communication to his disciples that the Evangelist applies the words, "Jesus cried, and said." Considered as a summary of our Lord's doctrine, they are just what was to be expected, in such a brief retrospective view of our Lord's ministry,¹ as, after Morus, who has been followed by Tittmann, Kuinoel, and Tholuck, we have endeavoured to show that paragraph to be. In this case the aorist² has the sense of the pluperfect.

These sentences, uttered by our Lord probably often, at different times, and in various circumstances, contain in them the sum and substance of all that He taught. They will be found, on examination, to teach the divinity of his mission; the divinity of his doctrine; the divinity of his person; the design of his mission, to save; the manner in which individuals are to be interested in his salvation, by believing in him; and the final doom of those who, refusing to believe in him, necessarily exclude themselves from all interest in his salvation. These, according to this abstract made by the Evangelist, we apprehend, in the very words of our Lord, were the great heads of doctrine which He taught. Let us look at the statement made on those topics in this passage, and compare them with the recorded discourses of our Lord.

(1.) Our Lord taught the divinity of his mission. "The Father," said he, "hath sent me," verse 49. There is nothing which our Lord more plainly or more frequently stated in the course of his ministry than this. The name by which he most frequently speaks of the divinity is,³ "He who sent me;" or,⁴ "the Father who hath sent me." The Father, he declares, sent him as he sent his apostles. "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you." "I came not of myself, my Father sent me." "I must preach," said he,

¹ *Epiphonema totius historię.*—GROTIUS. *Epicrisis Generalis.*—BENGER.

² *Ἐξαφισ.*

³ *Ὁ ἀποστείλας με.*

⁴ *Ὁ ἀποστείλας με πατέρα.*

"for therefore am I sent." "I am not come of myself that sent me is true; I am from him, He sent me;" and his intercessory prayer, how often does he say to his Father "Thou hast sent me, Thou didst send me?" It is quite obvious, then, that those persons are in a mistake who think that Jesus Christ was merely a very wise and very good man, probably the wisest and best man the world ever saw; having no other Divine mission but what every good and wise man has, to do all the good he can among his fellow-men, in diffusing truth, and promoting justice, peace, liberty and happiness. Jesus Christ most distinctly claimed a Divine mission from God, in the highest sense the words can bear; there is no alternative between receiving him as a Divine messenger, and holding him a deluded fanatic or a deluding impostor.

(2.) But this abstract informs us that our Lord not only taught the divinity of his mission, but the divinity of his doctrine. He asserted not only that God had sent him, but that he had sent him to teach men; and not only that God had sent him to teach men, generally qualifying him for his work by giving him the necessary endowments, intellectual and moral, but that he had furnished him with the message which he was to deliver; so that his doctrine was not only the doctrine of a Divine messenger, but it was, in the strictest and highest sense of the word, a Divine doctrine, the teaching of God. Verse 49, "I have not spoken of myself: the Father who sent me, he gave a commandment unto me, what I should say, and what I should speak;" rather than Campbell, "what I should enjoin, and what I should teach." Verse 50, "Whatsoever I speak, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." Verse 44, "He that believeth on me, shall not believe on me, but on him who sent me." These words, taken by themselves, are somewhat enigmatical, but might be said, and indeed has been said, if he who believes in Jesus does not believe in him, surely much more he does not believe in him who sent him; and if he does not believe in him who sent him, neither they who believe in him, nor they who do not be-

in him, believe in him, none can believe in him ; but, in connexion with the other parts of the abstract, the meaning is plain. ‘He who believes my doctrine, believes it as I have taught it, divine doctrine ; he gives credit to God whose truth it is.’ He did not bring it forward as an opinion of the man Jesus, but as the truth which, as the sent one, he had heard of the Father, who had sent him. Being the sent of God, he spoke the words of God ; and therefore he said, “My doctrine is not mine, but his who sent me.”

(3.) But, according to this abstract of his doctrine, our Lord taught not only the divinity of his mission, which was much, and the divinity of his doctrine, which was more, but the divinity of his person, which was most of all. “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” That Jesus Christ meant to claim identity of *nature* with his Father in these words, there can be no reasonable doubt. We have his own commentary on them in his conversation with Philip. “Show us the Father,” said Philip, “and it sufficeth us.” “Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip ? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father ; and how sayest thou, Show us the Father ? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me ? the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself : but the Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” He plainly, in the words before us, indicates that he is the personal revealer of God ; “the life who was the light of men ;” the visible representation of the invisible one. He who heard his words heard God speak ; he who saw his miracles saw God acting. With regard to his miraculous operations, this is the great distinction between Him and all other divinely commissioned teachers and miracle workers. Even Moses, who saw God face to face, durst not have said, “He that seeth me seeth the Father.” He says, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” “The Son can do nothing of himself,” apart from the Father ; “he doeth what he seeth the Father do. Whatsoever things the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” He said,

“I and my Father are one;” one, not only in mind, but in operation. The doctrine of our Lord's proper divinity, though not stated for obvious reasons in the same clear, direct terms as in the writings of the apostles, obviously occupied an important place in his own teaching. The Jews understood him to claim equality with God, from the peculiar terms in which he spoke of him as his “own Father;”¹ and instead of setting them right, on the supposition that they were wrong, which, with a very few words he could have easily done, all he said, and all he did, was calculated to confirm them in the conviction, that “he, being a man, did make himself equal with God.” The belief of the divinity of Christ's person, equally with the divinity of his mission, and the divinity of his doctrine, is necessary to make a man a Christian in the only legitimate sense of the word; a man who believes the religion which Jesus Christ taught.

(4.) The fourth article in our Lord's teaching contained in this abstract refers to the design of his mission, which was the salvation of men. “I am come a light into the world, that they may not abide in darkness. I came not to judge, but to save the world.” The two declarations are parallel; they are of synonymous meaning. What the first indicates by a beautiful figure, the second states in plain, literal expressions. Men, in their fallen state, are in a state of darkness; a state of ignorance and error, of guilt and depravity, of discomfort and misery, of distance from “God,” who “is light, and in whom is no darkness at all.” Jesus proclaimed himself the light of the world, the author and bestower of salvation, the deliverer from ignorance and error, and guilt and depravity, and discomfort and misery; he who procures for, and communicates to, man the knowledge of truth, the possession of holiness, the enjoyment of happiness; he who brings men to all these by bringing them to God. He came “not to judge the world, but to save the world.” The word² translated judge, when placed as here and in

¹ ἰδίον πατέρα.

² Κρίνειν.

the third chapter of this gospel, in contrast with "save,"¹ means to punish. The design of his coming, of his doctrine, of his expiatory sufferings and death, was not to punish men as they deserved, but to save them; to deliver them from guilt and depravity, from Divine wrath and everlasting destruction. This is, as it were, the very keystone of the arch of Christian doctrine. This Jesus declared with peculiar plainness. "The Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister and give himself a ransom for many. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." It was love, pure love, which brought Jesus into our world, to do the work of love, to deliver, to save. The design of our Lord's mission was entirely benignant.

(5.) The statement of the manner in which individual men are personally interested in the salvation he came to procure and bestow, is, according to this abstract, another part of the Divine message, delivered by our Lord as a Divine messenger. "He that believeth on me shall not abide in darkness." "I know that the commandment which the Father hath given me," that is, the doctrine he has given me to teach, "is life everlasting." He that believes the truth spoken by Christ, respecting his own personal mission and work, shall by that faith be made a partaker of the salvation which he was divinely sent to procure and bestow. "He shall not abide in darkness," in that state of error and guilt, and depravity and misery, which is natural to man; "but shall have the light of life," shall know the truth, shall be sanctified by the truth, shall be filled with hope, and peace, and holy joy, by the truth. The commandment of God given to his Son to

¹ Σωζω.

announce, is the command to believe in the name of the only begotten Son ; in obeying which, men, formerly spiritually dead, obtain life in his name.

(6.) The last article in this abstract of our Lord's message refers to the final doom of those who, refusing to believe in him, necessarily exclude themselves from all interest in his salvation. "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same will judge him in the last day." In the whole of this passage, the word judge,¹ being used in contrast with save,² signifies to punish. It is an awful as well as a blessed thing to hear the words of Jesus Christ. If they are believed, salvation is the certain result ; if they are not believed, punishment, severe, aggravated, endless punishment, is the as certain result.

"If any man hear my words, and believe not," says our Lord, "I judge, I punish him not." There is a sense in which our Lord will punish the unbeliever. He is the appointed judge of all ; angels and men, the quick and the dead. "The Father hath committed all judgment into his hands;" and in this case, as in every other in which a trust has been reposed in him, He will be "faithful to him who has appointed him." He will judge the world in righteousness. He will render to every man according to his deeds. It is He who will say to them on the left hand on the great day, "Depart from me accursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," as well as to those on the right hand, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world;" and the power of his sentence will drive the former down into the depths of everlasting punishment, as well as lift up the latter to the heights of life eternal.

But there must be a sense in which the declaration in our text is true. "I do not punish him who hears, and yet be-

¹ *Kρίνω.*² *Σωζω.*

lieves not my words." They *may* mean, ' I do not *now* punish him ; I am now working out the salvation of men ; I did not come into the world to punish men ; I came to lay down my life for them. No ingratitude or disobedience, no contempt or ill usage, will induce me to turn aside from the prosecution of the great object of my mission, or provoke me to call for legions of angels to protect myself, or fire from heaven to punish my opposers. I am not yet set down on the throne of judgment. I will judge, I will condemn. I will punish the obstinate unbeliever, but not now.' Or they *may* mean—I rather apprehend they *do* mean—' I am not the *cause* of the unbeliever's punishment. The man is undone ; but I am not the author of his undoing. He is his own destroyer. He can never see life ; but the reason is, he will not come in the faith of the truth to me, who am the life.¹ He will not have ME, and therefore he cannot have LIFE. He hates me and rejects me, and in doing so he acts as if he loved death and chose destruction ; for most assuredly he shall be judged and punished. " He has one that judgeth him : the word² that I have spoken, the same will judge him at the last day." ' What is that word ? It is apparently the doctrine respecting the connexion between faith and salvation, and unbelief and hopeless ruin. " Whosoever believeth in the Son of God shall not perish ; he is not condemned ; he shall never come into condemnation. He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him ; and this is the condemnation, light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; he that believeth not shall be damned." These are the words spoken by our Lord ; spoken not of himself, but by the commandment of the Father ; and according to these words shall the sentences of the last day be regulated. While these are the words of God, who cannot change his mind, who is not a man that he

¹ ἡ Ζωή.² ὁ λόγος.

should lie, or the Son of man that he should repent, how is it possible that the unbeliever should remain unpunished? He shuts himself out from the enjoyment of the only salvation; for the Christian salvation can, from its nature, only be obtained in believing, and he incurs the penalty of disobedience to the great commandment under the new economy, which is to believe in the name of the Son of God. "Hear ye him." This is the first and great commandment under the gospel, by complying with which alone we can yield obedience to the first and great commandment of the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind." Such is an abstract of the message delivered, the doctrine taught, by our Lord during his public ministry.

§ 2. *The manner of his teaching.*

Let us now, in the second place, attend for a little to the statement given respecting the manner in which this message was delivered, in which these doctrines were taught. "Jesus cried, and said."¹ It was promised of the Messiah, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street."² How, then, is it said of Jesus, "He cried, and said?" The reply is easy. The ancient oracle declares, that the Messiah should be no political agitator, stirring up sedition by inflammatory speeches, addressed to the common people; and we know he was not so, he did no violence. The words before us speak of him as a public teacher; and the publicity, the earnestness, and the fearlessness of his teaching seem to be the ideas intended to be suggested by them.

(1.) He taught these doctrines publicly. The ancient oracle was verified in him. "Doth not wisdom, the word, the wisdom of God, cry, and understanding put forth her voice? She standeth on the top of high places, by the way, in the places of the paths. She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in of the doors. Unto you,

¹ Ἰησοῦς δὲ ἐκράζει καὶ λέγει.

² Isa. xlii. 2.

O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men." Our Lord did not confine his teaching to a few. He did not, like Mohammed and other impostors, conceal his doctrines till, by private exertions, he had secured a considerable number of followers. He frequented the cities, and from the beginning he went into the synagogues. Very soon after the commencement of his ministry he went up to Jerusalem, and taught in the temple ; so that when the High Priest, on his trial, asked him of his disciples and his doctrine, he could reply, "I spake openly to the world ; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, where the Jews always resort ; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me ? ask them that heard me, what I have said to them : behold, they know what I said." His audience was often a very large one, so that it was necessary to "cry," to speak loud, so as that they might hear him.

(2.) But the words seem to indicate, not only the publicity of our Lord's teaching, but his earnestness in teaching. He sometimes, often, spoke in a low voice, and conversational tone, "talking with the people ;" but he at other times lifted up his voice like a trumpet, cried, and spared not. The deep conviction he had of the truth and importance of the message, and the stupid unconcern of the great body of his auditors in that which involved interests so deep and awful, the authority of God and their own everlasting salvation or perdition, produced a holy excitement, which found its natural expression in energetic speaking. Even in secret, when the current of his thoughts on the same subject was turned towards his Father, "he offered up prayers and supplications, with *strong crying* and tears." The earnestness of his manner indicated how gladly he would have gathered "them, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." We read that at the feast of tabernacles, on the third day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried,¹ saying, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on

¹ *Ἐκράζει.*

me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."

(3.) Finally, the words, "he cried, and said," naturally indicate his fearlessness in delivering the message he had been entrusted with. He well knew how unpalatable his doctrines were to those to whom they were addressed, and how great and imminent were the dangers he exposed himself to by a public avowal of them. He was quite aware that his doctrines would alienate the populace, at the same time that they displeased the rulers. But he "set his face as a flint, and refused to be ashamed." He had but to be silent to be safe; but with the cross full in view, as the certain consequence of his continuing to teach such doctrines, He still cried in proclaiming them.

These remarks on our Lord's doctrine and mode of teaching, furnish us with the means of forming a just judgment of what is true evangelical preaching, both as to matter and manner. He only preaches true Christianity who preaches what Christ preached; and he only preaches it rightly who preaches it as Christ preached it. There is something wrong in any course of ministerial instruction called Christian, if it does not substantially correspond with the abstract contained in the text of the Master's ministry. He must be the great subject. Christ must be preached; he must be all in all. His Divine mission must be strongly asserted and clearly proved. His doctrines and laws must be held up, not as the opinions and counsels of the wisest and best of men, Jesus the son of Joseph; but as the authoritative revelation of the mind and will of that God who is the Author of truth, the Father of lights, and the Lord of the conscience, by God's own Son, who is one with him. He must be held up "as God manifest in the flesh," the visible representation of the invisible Divinity; the glorious effulgence of the uncreated light; the substantial image of him of whom all creation is merely a shadow,—"the great God, our Saviour." His work must be represented in all its glorious extent and abso-

lute perfection, and his salvation in all its fulness and freedom. It must be proclaimed that he is the Saviour of the race; that he came a light into the world; that he came not to judge, condemn, or punish, but to atone, and propitiate, and pardon, and save. With equal clearness must it be declared, that it is only in the faith of the truth respecting his person and work that the blessings of his free and full salvation can be personally enjoyed; that though he has come a light into the world, it is only he who believeth on him that shall not abide in darkness; that though in him, through his blood, there is redemption, even the forgiveness of sin, salvation with eternal glory, it is only whosoever believeth in him that shall obtain that forgiveness, and enjoy that salvation, that shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Finally, the consequences of neglecting or rejecting him, the divinely-commissioned, divine Saviour, must be faithfully stated. With no uncertain sound must it be proclaimed that there is no salvation in any other; and that men, already in a perishing condition, if not saved by him, must sink deeper and deeper in hopeless perdition for ever and ever. It must be clearly stated, that for these fearful consequences He is in no way answerable; that he is the Saviour, not the destroyer, of men; and that if men, within the limits of the revelation of the saving economy, perish, they are doubly self-destroyers. But it must be added with equal plainness, that their destruction is not the less certain of this. The word which, if believed, would have been to them the gospel of their salvation, neglected, disbelieved, disobeyed, absolutely secures their condemnation and punishment. When these doctrines are distinctly declared, then the gospel is preached; where they are concealed, or where doctrines inconsistent with these are taught, the gospel is not preached. Let ministers then take heed what they preach, and let hearers take heed what they hear.

And as he who would preach the gospel must take care that he preaches the very same doctrines which the Master taught, so must he also, so far as is possible, imitate him in

his manner of preaching them. He must readily embrace every means of making as public and extensive a proclamation of the saving truth as possible; proclaiming it, as our Lord says, from the house-tops, going out to the highways, and crying after those who are madly prosecuting the downward path of perdition. He must, like the Master, throw his whole heart as it were into his voice. He must speak as believing, persuaded equally of the reality of man's hazard and Christ's salvation. He must beseech men. He must pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. There is something shockingly unnatural in a cold, lifeless statement of Christian truth. Where there is not something very peculiar in the physical constitution, it lays a foundation for doubts as to the sincerity of the speaker, and places great obstacles in the way of the truth having free course among those to whom it is addressed. There is but one greater fault than this in the manner of preaching, and that is the affectation of an interest that is not felt, the attempt to make inflated language, boisterous vociferation, and vehement gesture, a substitute for that deep, interested, natural eloquence, which nothing but the truth clearly apprehended and strongly felt can produce. Fearlessness as well as earnestness must characterise the preacher of evangelical truth. There must be no trimming, no time-serving, no keeping back any part of the counsel of God. The gospel, the pure gospel, the whole gospel, must be declared, whether man will listen, hear, and believe, or neglect and disobey it. In every age, teachers of Christianity will be tempted, in some way or other, to modify the gospel message, so as to gratify the prejudices, or escape the censures, of some of those to whom they minister. When they in any degree do so, they act a most unworthy part: seeking to please men, they certainly are not acting like either the servants or the followers of Him who was "faithful to him who appointed him;" who, in the face of the greatest opposition and danger, the contradiction of sinners against himself, "preached righteousness in the great congregation, and refrained not

his lips ; hid not God's righteousness within his heart, but declared God's faithfulness and salvation, and concealed not his loving-kindness and truth from the great congregation."

It is only when these truths are thus spoken that we have reason to hope for the desired success. Even this will not command it. For though the Master said all this in this way, speaking the very truth most sure so as never man spake it, and accompanying it by so many and so great miracles, they to whom he spake believed not in him. "The Spirit must be poured out from on high," otherwise truth, however pure, and however impressively uttered, will not find its way to the darkened, hardened mind, and conscience and heart of man.

But to open a channel for that Divine influence to descend copiously, Jesus died ; and that he died not in vain we know, for he is glorified, and the Spirit is given, "shed forth abundantly," in answer to the believing prayer of the church of God. Were a pure gospel but impressively preached throughout the world, there is no need to fear that the influences of the Spirit implored in faith would be withheld, or sparingly communicated. "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that proceedeth out of my mouth : it shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it."

Let all, then, who wish well to the church and to the world, pray and labour for an universally diffused, impressive, affectionate dispensation of a pure and complete gospel, an unhampered exhibition and urgent offer of a full and free salvation. This is a state of things which implies a large communication of Divine influence, and which would soon secure a larger. Christ's ministers so numerous, as that every human being may hear the gospel, and "Christ speaking in every one of them," that is, every one speaking Christ's truth in Christ's Spirit : this is the right state of

things; the state of things which, but for the fault of the church, might, humanly speaking, have been ages ago realized. Oh! who would not labour without weariness, and pray without ceasing, for this?

§ 3. *The evidence he produced.*

I now go on to direct your attention to the third circumstance in the details of our Lord's ministry which this abstract brings before our minds,—the evidence by which He confirmed those doctrines which he so publicly, earnestly, and fearlessly proclaimed. Our Lord did not call on his countrymen to receive his doctrines without evidence; and the evidence he presented was appropriate to the character of his doctrines,—as an authoritative message from one who had a right to demand unhesitating belief and implicit obedience. He did not attempt to demonstrate his doctrines on rational principles. He directly appealed to God, who, he declared, had sent him; to God, *speaking* in the acknowledged revelation of his mind and will in the Old Testament Scriptures; to God, *working* in those miraculous operations which He performed by him. His words were,—“I receive not testimony from men; the Father who hath sent me hath borne witness of me. Ye search the Scriptures; they testify of me: if ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me. If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works.”

It is to the second of these Divine attestations of our Lord's doctrines, miraculous operation, that the Evangelist refers in this abstract. “He did many miracles before them.” As the word rendered “so many,”¹ may, with equal propriety, be rendered “so great,” the Evangelist may be considered as referring to the nature as well as to the

¹ *ὅσους*.

number of his miracles ; to their magnitude as well as to their multitude ; and the statement as to the evidence of our Lord's doctrines given in the text, may be viewed as including the four following propositions :—He did miracles ; he did great miracles ; he did many great miracles ; and he did many great miracles before them. Let us very shortly consider these propositions in their order.

The first proposition is, Our Lord did miracles, and thus proved his doctrines. The words literally are, “he did so many or so great signs ;”¹ he did actions which were tokens or signals of the truth of his doctrines. Here it will be necessary to show what it is to do a miracle ; then, that our Lord did miracles ; and then, how the doing miracles proves the truth of doctrines.

It is not very easy to give an entirely unobjectionable definition of a miracle ; but, in reference to man, that may be said to be miraculous which is above human power ; which no man, in the exercise of the faculties belonging to human nature, can perform. That our Lord in this sense did miracles, there can be no doubt in any man's mind who credits the sacred historian. To cure disease ; to restore the senses of sight and hearing, and the faculty of speech, to those who had lost them, or to give them to those who had always been destitute of them ; to calm the stormy elements ; to restore life to the dead ; to do some of these things at all, to do any of them instantaneously, by a mere act of will, indicated by uttering a word, is plainly above human power ;—and our Saviour did them all.

Having thus seen what it is to do a miracle, and having seen also that our Lord did miracles, it only remains here that we endeavour to show, how the doing miracles is an evidence of the truth of doctrines. The truth on this subject was never more distinctly spoken than by Nicodemus, when he said to our Lord, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God ; for no man can do these mira-

¹ *σημεια.*

cles which thou doest, except God be with him." A miracle is plainly not like a demonstration, a direct proof of the truth of any proposition, or indeed of any fact but itself, that such a thing has been done, in such a way; but when it is performed expressly for the purpose of attesting a Divine commission, it is the most direct and satisfactory evidence which can be given that the claim made is a just one, and that the message, which he who performs it as an accredited messenger delivers, is deserving of the same reception as if it came directly from God, who cannot be deceived and who cannot deceive. "If a messenger, claiming to bear a commission from any distant friend or superior, were to produce to us a signet known to be genuine, if we knew it to be a signet which could come only from that person from whose hands he professes to have received it, and were also certain that it had not been stolen, his possession of that signet would be full proof of his claim."¹ The power of working miracles, properly speaking, belongs to God; and when that power is put forth in connexion with a word spoken, or an act performed, by a man claiming to be a Divine messenger, it is plainly the seal of God appended to that man's commission. The power is Divine, and the authority of the message which it authenticates is, and must be, Divine also. This is plainly our Lord's doctrine respecting miracles: "I do works which no other man ever did. My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. The Father that dwelleth in me doeth the works. Believe the works; believe me for the work's sake." And it is equally plain that this is the doctrine of sound philosophy and of common sense.

I know nothing that can be urged against this doctrine, except that there may be created beings who have powers superior to man; that effects produced by their peculiar powers may, must appear to be, miraculous to man; and that such effects may be produced for the purpose of leading men to recognise as a Divine messenger one who is not so, and

¹ Penrose.

to receive as true doctrines that are indeed false. To remove this difficulty, it has been contended by some, that though created beings, of a higher order than man, may perform acts above human power, a real miracle, which they define to be a contradiction of one of those laws of nature, which their Author only can suspend or violate, is beyond the power which any created being can be supposed to possess ; and by others, that though we cannot distinctly mark the limits of the sphere of operation of beings superior to man, they are never permitted to work miracles except under the special direction of God ; and therefore that He is properly to be accounted the sole author of all real miracles whatsoever.

I am afraid the argument limps a little in both these statements. Neither of them exactly meets the case. The true answer to the difficulty is, I apprehend, to be found in the moral character of the Supreme Being, his veracity, and benignity. He is under no temptation to deceive, he is incapable of deceiving. He will not permit what would, what must, invincibly deceive. If I had no confidence in these perfections, no manifestation of mere power on the part of the Divinity could induce me to believe a message coming from him. I would of course believe it to come from Him who alone could do the works ; but whether it was true or not, is a question which would be answered by me just according to the view I had of his moral character. If I considered him as a God of truth, and without iniquity, I would believe the message, not otherwise. If I knew nothing about his moral character, I would just wonder at the miracle. I could draw no consequence from it as to the truth of the revelation. I could draw no consequence from it at all, but that the course of nature was not so inviolable as I had supposed it ; and that as *one* very strange thing had happened, other very strange things might happen. If I knew that he was malignant and untrue, I certainly would not believe ; if I suspected him of these qualities, I would doubt ; but if I know that HE cannot be deceived, that he cannot deceive, I believe just because he says it. And

the same well-grounded confidence in the Divine veracity which secures my believing a doctrine if he confirm it by miraculous agency, assures me that he never has permitted, and that he never will permit, any created being, of power however exalted, and influenced by principles however malignant, so to put forth his power in support of error, as to make it impossible for one disposed to receive truth when Divinely attested to escape being imposed on. No instance of an uncontrolled miracle in support of falsehood, in support of a self-contradiction, or of what has been proved to be inconsistent with facts, has ever occurred; and we are warranted to hold that it never can occur. It is worse than folly to ask what we ought to do, should such an unexampled, such an impossible case take place. It is enough to hold, that God sanctions all miraculous operations if he do not refute them; that is, if he do not afford to man the necessary means of refutation. If there be no such means, it follows that the performance of a miracle, or the real exertion of any unequivocally superhuman power, is conclusive of a strictly Divine authority in any communication which it may be brought to attest. So much for the illustration of the first proposition: Our Lord did miracles, and, in doing miracles, gave evidence of the truth of the doctrines which he so publicly, earnestly, and fearlessly taught.¹

¹ These remarks seem to me sufficient for our purpose. The objections which, in the very wantonness of scepticism, have been suggested against the possibility of a miracle being performed—or, though performed, becoming credible—are scarcely deserving of the very laborious examination, and very satisfactory replies, which they have received. The first of these objections can be sustained only on atheistic principles; and, to the second, even a shadow of plausibility can be given only by confounding two things so very distinct, as the uniform experience of the individual and the uniform experience of the race. If any of you have any curiosity about the matter—and I should be very sorry to think any of you have not—I would recommend him to look into Hume's "Essay on Miracles;" where the objections are stated with all the plausibility which a man of singularly acute and subtle mind, having the entire command of a remarkably perspicuous and polished style, could give them;—and, for a reply, to Campbell's "Dissertation on Miracles," Farmer "On Miracles," Dick's "Essay on Inspiration," Bogue "On the Authority of the New Testament," or the Introductory Remarks to "Paley's Evidences;" and to "Dr

The second proposition is, Our Lord did "great miracles." He did works which not only exceeded, but obviously exceeded, and far exceeded human power. In curing diseases, he healed in a moment the most inveterate chronic distempers, and restored the patient to perfect health. He not only restored sight instantaneously to those who had lost it, but he gave it to those who had never possessed it. He not only converted water into wine, but he did so in large quantity. When he fed the hungry, by miraculously multiplying a few loaves and fishes, it was by thousands. When he controlled the elements, it was when they were in the very height of tumultuous agitation, and the effect was instant as well as complete: "Immediately there was a great calm." When he broke the bands of death, he not only, as in the case of Jairus' daughter, called back the spirit which had just departed, but he reanimated the son of the widow of Nain when they were carrying him to his grave; and he called forth Lazarus, after having lain for days in the sepulchre.

The greatness of our Lord's miracles, added to their power as evidence of his mission. Their magnitude forced them on the attention of those who witnessed them, and took away every ground for urging, that full opportunity was not afforded for ascertaining their reality. They were events which, if they took place at all, there could be no dubiety about. There was no room for trick or sleight of hand, or management or concealment in them.

The third proposition is, Our Lord did many "such great miracles." One of these great miracles—ay, one uncontrolled miraculous act—though not of so striking a character as any of those we have noticed, if sufficiently attested, would have been proof of a Divine mission. But the miracles of our Lord were as remarkable for their multitude as for their magnitude; they were far more numerous than all the

Chalmers' Evidences;" where the argument on this head is equally ingenious and satisfactory. Penrose and Le Bas' works, especially the first, are also well deserving of perusal.

miracles of all the prophets. Moses' recorded miracles have been computed at seventy-six; Elisha seems to have performed twelve miracles; and Elijah somewhat fewer. The whole miracles recorded in the Old Testament do not exceed one hundred and fifty. But who can count the miracles of Jesus? John does not record particularly more than seven; but how many are particularly recorded by the other Evangelists? and how many more are generally referred to? As when we are told that "he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with diverse diseases and torments, and those that were possessed with devils, and those that were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and beyond Jordan." It is recorded by Luke, as if it were an every-day occurrence, "that when he went aside to a private place, the people when they knew it followed him; and he received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing." Many other signs besides those written in the Gospels, did Jesus in the presence of his disciples; so that there seems scarcely need to have recourse to the supposition of a hyperbole to interpret John's words, "There are many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world could not contain the books that should be written." We may apply to Him words which he used in reference to his Father,—“Many, O Lord, are thy wonderful works! they cannot be reckoned up in order! if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered!”

And then, they were not only many in number, but many in kind. They are as remarkable for their variety as for their multitude. It was not merely by the Divine power,

being very often exerted in the same way, but by its being often exerted in a great variety of ways, that the divinity of the mission, and doctrine, and person, of our Lord were attested.

Now, this number and variety of our Lord's miracles add to their power, as evidence of his Divine commission. It has been justly remarked, that, "if God sanction a messenger, it is probable that he will commission him to work more than one miracle, or one kind of miracle. We can hardly imagine that any messenger from heaven should mix familiarly, as Christ and Moses did, with mankind, and that *many* occasions should not arise in which it would be proper, and we may say natural, for him to exercise that power of working miracles which we suppose committed to him. He who informs us of a Divine messenger who performed many miracles, must appear to come to us with a more probable story than one who tells us of such a messenger who performed only one."¹

The fourth proposition implied in the Evangelist's statement, as to the evidence which our Lord brought forward for his doctrines, is, that he did these many great miracles² "before his countrymen." Our Lord's miracles were not like the pretended miracles of later ages, performed entirely, or for the most part, in the presence of those only who were interested in supporting the system which they were intended to confirm. He is said by John to have done many signs in the "presence of his disciples," but he seems to have performed very few in their presence alone. His miracles were performed before doubters, unbelievers, determined enemies; they were performed in the cities, in the streets of the cities, in the synagogues, and in the temple, at the great annual festivals, when there was such a conflux of persons to the metropolis; and if the desert was sometimes the scene of his beneficent power, it was when it had become populous by thousands who gathered around him. Even in his retire-

¹ Penrose.

² Εμπροσθεν αυτων.

ment, he might have said of his miracles as he did of his doctrine,¹ "In secret I have done nothing."

That our Lord chose such places and such occasions for the performance of his miracles, was a plain proof that he did not shun but court enquiry. It afforded a strong presumption in favour of the justice of his claims, as well as of his honesty in making them, and it increased the number of those who were laid under obligations to receive him, and greatly aggravated the guilt of those who, though so many great miracles had been done before them, yet continued to disbelieve and reject him. A very considerable proportion of the whole population of the Holy Land, must directly or indirectly have been indebted to the miraculous healing agency of our Lord.

There are certain other circumstances respecting the miracles of our Lord, which go to add to their force as evidence of the doctrines which he taught, besides their magnitude, their multitude, their variety, and their publicity; and as the object of the Evangelist is plainly to place the claims, which our Lord's miracles gave him on the belief of his countrymen, in the strongest possible light, we apprehend no apology is necessary for here, very cursorily, advert-
ing to some of them. The spirit of the Evangelist's statement is, 'though he had done *such* miracles, miracles in every point of view so fitted to produce belief of the message, and to secure a glad and grateful reception of the Divine messenger, come in the name of the Lord to save.'

The miracles of our Lord were all, with one exception, of a beneficial kind; and even that one, the blighting the barren fig-tree, had for its object an inanimate being, which could feel no pain, and sustain no loss. Was that not something very much fitted to make the miracles, as evidence, more efficacious? Was it not natural that prejudice should give way before such generous beneficence? And was there not something absolutely monstrous in men rejecting

¹ *Et secretum tenuisse audit.*

the heavenly Teacher, who proved his mission by bestowing upon them such blessings?

They were performed with no appearance of pride or ostentation. They were never wrought to secure worldly advantages for himself. The only apparent exception is, when he miraculously procured the means of paying the temple tribute for himself and the Apostle Peter.

They were performed at a time and in circumstances where, if there had been any thing like imposture in them, it was sure to be exposed; and yet not the slightest whisper of doubt is ever heard for many centuries as to the reality of those miracles.

Finally, they were the very kind of miracles which the Old Testament prophets predicted should be performed by the Messiah. "Behold," says Isaiah, speaking of the Messiah, "Behold, your God shall come. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb, sing." Well might our Lord say to the disciples of John, when they came to propose the question, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" "Go, and show John those things which ye hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me."

Such were the miracles which our Lord had for three years and a half been doing before his countrymen, in confirmation of the doctrines which he publicly, earnestly, and fearlessly proclaimed among them.

What the effect of these miracles ought to have been on the minds of those who witnessed them, is a subject on which we must all be of one opinion. They should have produced reverent, serious inquiry; and as that inquiry produced and strengthened, as it must have done, the conviction, that these were such miracles as no man could do except God were

with him, they who witnessed them ought gladly and gratefully to have welcomed the Divine Messenger, and, sitting down at his feet as his disciples, should, with unhesitating assent, have believed whatever he said to be true; and, with implicit obedience, have submitted to whatever he was pleased to enjoin or appoint as reasonable and right. We would probably find it difficult, in language sufficiently strong, to express our wonder at the stupidity, and our indignation at the criminality, of the conduct of our Lord's unbelieving, disobedient countrymen. It would, indeed, not be easy to exaggerate either the folly or the criminality of "that untoward generation." But let us take heed, lest in condemning them we condemn ourselves; lest there be ground for saying, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee;" "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgeth; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself: for thou that judgest dost the same things." This may seem a hard saying, and we may be disposed to say, "Who can hear it?" "How can these things be?" But let us "judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." Does not Jesus still cry and say to us, what he cried and said to his countrymen? Does he not speak to us from heaven, what he spake to them on earth? Ay, and has he not done all those many great miracles before us? Have we not both the doctrines and the evidence brought before our minds in a plain, well-accredited revelation? Has he not been crying and saying these things to us, not for two years and a half merely, but ever since we were capable of listening to, or understanding them? And, during the same period, have not these many great miracles been pressed on our attention, "as attesting his mission and confirming his doctrines?"

A great philosopher¹ has remarked, that "a history transmitted through a succession of generations, loses at each transmission some part of its claim on our belief." If it be

¹ Locke.

so, it is only within certain and easily defined limits. It does so only if it lose part of its proof; but it would be very difficult to show that, taking for granted what can easily be demonstrated, the truth of the gospel history, we have less proof of the reality of these miracles than those who lived a thousand years ago, ay, than those who received an account of them from the eye-witnesses. And even as to the eye-witnesses, though we cannot have the vividness of their apprehension of the evidence, we may have the evidence itself as fully before us as they had. It has been very justly said, that "even the evidence of eye-witnesses may be inferior to documentary evidence. If we could examine all the witnesses, or a sufficient number of them, we have all the elements of the fullest proof in our hands. No evidence can be imagined more perfect than this. But if we see only one, or only a few of the eye-witnesses, or if we see them without possessing the means of judging of their credibility, an authentic document which details clearly the whole evidence may be better authority than that of one or even of a number of eye-witnesses."¹ The evidence of the reality of the miracles of Jesus we enjoy in the plain, well authenticated record of the New Testament, is stronger than those men had who heard of them from one or two eye-witnesses. And though I never can feel with regard to an event of which I have merely obtained the most satisfactory evidence, as I do in reference to one of which I have been an eye-witness, I may be as certain, as rationally convinced, with regard to the one as to the other. And it is not a vivid feeling, but a certain conviction, that is to be our guide in reference to those great interests which are linked with the reception or the rejection of the miracles of Christ, and of the doctrines which they were intended to confirm.

It should be recollected, too, that many great miracles, in addition to those which had been done before the Jewish people, at the time the evangelist wrote the words now under

¹ Penrose.

consideration, have been performed in confirmation of the doctrines of Christ. The crowning miracle of the resurrection has since taken place. The wonders of Pentecost, the mighty works done by the hands of the apostles, the rapid progress of the gospel throughout the world; these, recorded in an undoubtedly authentic history, give Christ Jesus, if possible, stronger claims on our faith and obedience than he had on his countrymen in the days of his flesh, even on such of them as heard his words and witnessed his miracles. Add to all this the fulfilment of prophecy during eighteen centuries, and the standing miracle of the Jewish nation, that people "wonderful from the beginning hitherto." Infidel, unbelieving Gentiles, who have the New Testament in their hands, are in the same condemnation with the unbelieving Jews, not less highly privileged, not less deeply guilty.

It is astonishing how apt we are, under the influence of self-love, to exaggerate the abused privileges, and consequent penal responsibilities of others, and underrate our own; and to anticipate, with something like satisfaction with ourselves for so cordially sympathizing with the awards of justice, a punishment for them which we ourselves have still more richly merited. It will be wise in us seriously to consider how we, to whom the word of this salvation has come, and to whom the wonderful works of the Saviour have been unfolded, shall escape, if we reject that salvation, in consequence of refusing to yield to the evidence by which it has been confirmed? "What was spoken by the Lord has been confirmed to us by them who heard him, and God has borne them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."

We call, then, your attention, my young friends, to the message of our Lord, and the evidence by which it is supported; a message of a free, a full, an everlasting, the only, salvation for men; evidence abundantly sufficient to make it the most reasonable thing in the world for man to rest all

the weight of his interests for eternity, his all on it. "If this fail, the pillared firmament is rottenness, and earth's base built on stubble." To state that message, and that evidence, is the appropriate function of the high and holy office to which you are aspiring; and you will not perform it well, comfortably to yourselves, acceptably to your Master, usefully to mankind, if you do not personally embrace the truth, and the Saviour the truth reveals, each of you for himself. Nor is it only the success of your future ministry which hangs on this; your own individual salvation depends on it. "Be it known to you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware, therefore, lest that come upon any of you, which is spoken of in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in nowise believe, though a man declare it unto you." These words were addressed to the Jews, addressed to most of them in vain. The word preached, the miracles performed, did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them when the one was heard, and the other witnessed. They would not count the promise of mercy true, and to their cost found the truth of the threatening of judgment. They disregarded the miracles of grace, and became themselves signs and wonders of righteous vengeance. It was not as Jews, but as unbelievers, that they incurred so dreadful a doom. The unbelieving Gentile is not safer than the unbelieving Jew; nor assuredly is the unbelieving minister, or student of divinity, safer than the unbeliever in the walks of private life. God is not a respecter of persons. Take heed, take heed, lest any of you fall after the same example of unbelief. God forbid that any of you should ever preach an unbelieved gospel, or recommend a salvation, or a Saviour, of whose excellence and efficacy you have no experience. Is there a student here who has not yet believed the Saviour's doctrine, let him hear the warning voice, "What hast *thou* to do to

declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" and let him, either in the belief of the truth be reconciled to God through the death of his Son, or abandon the thought, in him in his present circumstances a most presumptuous and indeed monstrous one, of being "a minister of reconciliation."

PART II.

OF THE RESULTS OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY.

The RESULTS of our Lord's ministry, as these are presented to our minds in the paragraph before us, are to form the subject of the remaining part of our present discourse. These results were very different from what they ought to have been. All who heard his discourses, and saw his miracles, ought without doubt to have believed in him, and submitted to him, as their divinely-appointed, qualified, and accredited Divine teacher, Saviour, and Lord. Our Lord's ministry had this result, but only in the case of a comparatively very small number of persons, the greater part of whom belonged to the humbler and less educated portion of the Jewish people. The great body of his countrymen refused to acknowledge him in the character to which he laid claim. The majority gave no credit to his claims; "they believed not on him." A small minority of the higher classes, small in comparison of the whole body of those who rejected our Lord, small in comparison even of those of their own body who rejected them, yet still a considerable number,¹ described by a word of more latitude than our English *many*, and corresponding more nearly with the French *plusieurs*, "several," as Campbell renders it, "of the chief rulers," being invincibly persuaded that there was truth in his claims, "believed on him;" but from worldly motives concealed their convictions,—they were afraid of

¹ Πολλοι.

being put out of the synagogue, loving the praise of men more than the praises of God. It is to the results of our Lord's ministry, in reference to these two last classes, that our text confines our attention. Let us consider them in their order.

1. With regard to the great body of the Jewish nation, we are told, that though he had publicly, earnestly, and fearlessly proclaimed his doctrines, and done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him. To us who generally hold that well-ascertained miracles are satisfactory evidence of a Divine mission, this seems very strange; but it does so merely because we do not sufficiently consider the circumstances of the case. Two opinions, which we know from the most satisfactory evidence prevailed extensively at that time among the Jews, account for what seems so strange an anomaly, the unquestioned performance of numerous miracles, and the decided rejection of the claims of the admitted miracle-worker to a Divine mission.

"The one of these opinions," I use the words of Dr Paley, "was the expectation entertained by the Jews of a Messiah of a kind totally contrary to what the appearance of Jesus bespoke him to be; the other, their persuasion of the agency of demons in the production of supernatural effects. These opinions are not supposed by us for the sake of argument, but are evidently recognised in the Jewish writings, as well as in ours. And it ought, moreover, to be considered, that in these opinions the Jews of that age had from their infancy been brought up; that they were opinions, the grounds of which they had probably few of them inquired into, and of which they entertained no doubt. These opinions conjointly afford an explanation of their conduct. The first put them upon seeking some excuse to themselves for not receiving Jesus in the character in which he claimed to be received; and the second supplied them with just such an excuse as they wanted. Let Jesus work what miracles he would, still the answer was in readiness, that he wrought them by the assistance of Beelzebub. And to this answer

no reply could be made but that which our Saviour did make, by showing that the tendency of his mission was so adverse to the views with which this being was by the objectors themselves supposed to act, that it could not be reasonably supposed that he would assist in carrying it on. The power displayed in the miracles did not alone refute the Jewish solution, because, the interposition of invisible agents being once admitted, it is impossible to ascertain the limits by which their efficiency is circumscribed. In these opinions the Jews of that age had from their infancy been instructed; and those who cannot see enough in the force of this reason to account for their conduct towards our Saviour, do not sufficiently consider how such opinions may sometimes become very general in a country, and with what pertinacity, when they once become so, they are for that reason alone adhered to. In the suspense which these notions and the prejudices resulting from them might occasion, the candid, and docile, and humble-minded would probably decide in Christ's favour; the proud and obstinate, together with the giddy and the thoughtless, almost universally against him. This state of opinion discovers to us also the reason of what some choose to wonder at, why the Jews should reject miracles when they saw them, yet rely so much on the tradition of them in their own history; why those who made so little of Jesus' miracles made so much of Moses'. It does not appear that it had ever entered into the minds of those who lived in the time of Moses and the prophets, to ascribe their miracles to the supernatural agency of evil beings. The solution was not then invented. And the authority of Moses and the prophets being established, and become the foundation of the national policy and religion, it was not probable that the later Jews, brought up in a reverence for that religion and the subjects of that polity, should apply to their history a reasoning which tended to overthrow the foundation of both."

In this general disbelief of the Jews the evangelist finds the fulfilment of Old Testament predictions; and in these

predictions he finds their strange and criminal conduct at once graphically described and satisfactorily accounted for. In acting the part they did, they fulfilled the declarations of the prophets; and they could not, morally speaking, but act the part they did, considering that they were just the sort of persons whom the prophets described, and from whom no other, no better, course of conduct could be reasonably expected. This is the substance of what the evangelist says in the thirty-eighth, thirty-ninth, fortieth, and forty-first verses, to the cursory illustration of which I would now call your attention.

“They believed not on him, that the saying of Esaias might be fulfilled which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?” These words certainly do not signify, what interpreting them strictly they express, that the Jews continued in unbelief with the intention of fulfilling the Old Testament prophecy; that they disregarded the claims of Jesus in order to confirm the claims of Isaiah. They did fulfil the prophecy, and confirm the claims of the prophets, but it was ignorantly and unintentionally. Nor do these words mean that the prediction was, properly speaking, the cause of its own fulfilment; that some direct Divine influence was exercised over the minds of the Jews, preventing them from believing, in order that the prophecy of Isaiah might not fail of accomplishment. The events were predicted, because he who inspired the prophet knew that they were to take place. They did not take place because they were predicted, though being predicted it was certain that they would take place, for he who predicted them could commit no mistakes.¹

The true interpretation depends on the fact, that the particle² rendered *that*, in the sense of *in order that*, sometimes signifies *so that*, pointing out, not the connexion of cause and effect, but that of antecedent and consequence, prediction and

“Non quia futura propheta predixit, ideo eveniunt,” says Chrysostom; “sed quoniam futura erant, ideo predixit.”

² Isa.

accomplishment. For example, in the question of the disciples, "Who did sin, this man or his parents, *that* he was born blind?" the meaning plainly is, 'Is this man's blindness the consequence of his parents' sin, or of his own in some pre-existent state?'¹ The meaning of the words before us is more clearly expressed thus, "They believed not, so that the saying of Esaias was fulfilled."

The words quoted are the first verse of the fifty-third chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, one of the most remarkable Messianic oracles in the Old Testament scriptures. They are the words of the divinely-appointed heralds, complaining that few believed the testimony with which they had been intrusted, respecting the toils and triumphs, the sufferings and glories of Jehovah's elect, righteous, servant; or understood the true import of the displays of the Divine power, with which the uttering that testimony was accompanied. The disbelief of the message, as delivered and confirmed by Messiah himself, was the commencement of the fulfilment of this prediction, which refers to the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews both during his life and after his death and resurrection. Few believed his report, and few had the arm of the Lord revealed to them; few of them perceived and felt the true force of those miracles performed by the Divine power, as evidence of the truth of the testimony; by being the credentials of him who uttered the testimony. They did not believe what Jesus said to them; and the reason was, they did not recognise in the many and great miracles he performed before them, a manifestation of Divine power made to accredit the miracle-worker as a Divine

¹ "Ira," as Kuinoel remarks, "in hoc loco, ut sæpius, eventum indicat." A case still more in point is Rev. xiii. 13. "He doth great wonders, *as* *he* *will* *that* *he* *may* *make*," plainly not in order that he may make, but "*as* that," as our translators render it, "he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth." It is justly remarked by Bengel,—"*Ira* frequens Joanni particula in omnibus suis libris; non nisi semel (Evang. iii. 16) '*Non* posuit.' Interpreters, for some time, were too ready to give *as* an adverbial force, rather than the *telic* signification, which properly belongs to it; but they err in the opposite direction, who would deny or explain away the adverbial sense altogether.

messenger. They saw in them, not "the arm of the Lord," but "the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders."

But the evangelist not only asserts that the Jews' rejection of the Saviour was the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, but that in ancient prophecy you have an account of the true cause of their rejecting him. "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, he hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them." The true cause of their unbelief is not to be found in the fact that Isaiah uttered this prediction, but in the facts which are stated in the prediction which Isaiah uttered. These Jews were the persons respecting whom Isaiah spake; they possessed the character which he describes; and it is because they possessed that character that it was a moral impossibility that they should believe such doctrines, even though accompanied by such attestations. They had blinded eyes and hardened hearts, and therefore they could not perceive and understand.

The reference here is to the concluding part of the sixth chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah. The passage, as it stands in the Old Testament Scriptures, is a strikingly expressed prediction of the obduracy of the Jewish people, from the time of Isaiah downwards to the time of Messiah. In the same way as Jeremiah is commanded to "root out, and to pull down, and to destroy nations," when the meaning is, that he should utter certain predictions that they should be rooted out, and pulled down, and destroyed; Isaiah is commanded to "make the heart of the Israelitish people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes," when the meaning is, that he was to declare that they were, and would continue to be, a spiritually stupid and obdurate people, and would draw down on themselves the judgments connected with such a character, in the appointments of the holy, moral government of God. The evangelist gives the sense, not the words of the ancient oracle. "He," that is plainly Je-

hovah, who gave the prophet his commission; *he* blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, *that*¹ (the title is to be understood, as in the thirty-eighth verse meaning not, *in order that*, but, *so that*) they see not with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, nor are converted nor healed by Him who alone can convert and heal them, and who converts and heals men by making them see with their eyes, and understand with their hearts.

The whole of the evangelist's statement may be included in the following propositions. The persons spoken of as having blinded eyes, and hardened hearts, or blunted understandings, in consequence of this, they do not see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts; in consequence of the not seeing with their eyes, and not understanding with their hearts, they do not repent, and are not healed; the Lord Being has a certain agency in reference to all this; and because the Jewish people were the people whose character is thus described in that oracle, that they *could* not be converted, I do not think that the words *can* mean less than this, and I do not think that they *do* mean more.

Blinded eyes, and a stupified heart, are descriptive of a mind become indisposed and unfit for the reception of spiritual truth, and for yielding to its natural influence in governing the conduct and forming the character. This is plain description, not of a physical but of a moral state. The man is not an idiot or a madman. He has faculties and powers; but he wilfully shuts his mind against the admission of truth, and hardens his heart against its influence. In the instance in which a man does so, increases his spiritual blindness and insensibility; and in the degree in which he is under their influence, he is morally incapable of being brought into a better state. It is plain that in thus blinding the eyes and hardening the heart, man himself is the guilty agent. He will not attend, he will not believe, he will not obey.

But in the passage before us, and in many other passages, God is represented as having an agency in thus blinding

men's minds, and hardening their hearts. What are we to understand by this? Most certainly not that God exercises a direct influence in hardening men in ignorance, and unbelief, and sin. As "he cannot be tempted by sin," so "neither tempteth he any man." He does much to prevent sin, much to reclaim from sin, nothing to make men sinners. He does not do what, according to the statements of some men who lay claim to a kind of transcendental orthodoxy, he has been represented as doing; he does not make man sin, that he may have an opportunity of punishing him. Far be it from God that he should do such iniquity. Far be it from the Almighty that he should thus pervert judgment. But he withholds that special influence which is necessary to conversion from the man who obstinately goes on in his trespasses; an influence which nothing but depravity renders necessary, and to which, of course, no one has, or can have, any claim. He permits the sinner to take his own course. He says, "he is joined to his idols, let him alone." The events which the depraved man abuses for the increase of his depravity, are events occurring in the course of the Divine providence; events taking place by the Divine appointment and the Divine agency. And the whole hardening process goes on in conformity with the great leading laws of the divinely formed human constitution. For example, the law of habit operates equally in the case of the man whom God is sanctifying, and of the man who is depraving himself. It is on the same general principle that the good man becomes better, and the bad man worse. Such seems to be the truth respecting what has commonly been termed judicial obduration. It is not direct, active influence, but neither is it mere passive permission.¹

¹ It is not that, by the command "make the heart of this people fat," we need understand as though any peculiar hardening passed on them; but that the Lord having constituted, as the righteous law of his moral government, that sin should produce darkness of heart and moral insensibility, declared that he would allow this law to take its course; even as that law is declared, in the latter half of Rom. i., to have taken its course with the Gentile world. In Augustine's awful words,—"*Deus solus magnus, lege infatigabili spargens cæcitates*"

Now the Jews being most criminally in that moral state in reference to truth and its influence, in which the prophets predicted they would be, their not believing in Jesus, withstanding his many, and great, and public miracles, just what might have been expected. It would have been a moral miracle, as great as any of our Lord's physical miracles, if such men had believed in such doctrines, submitted to such a teacher, or embraced such a Saviour.

The evangelist adds to this reference to the oracle of Isaiah the very remarkable words, "These things spake Esaias, when he saw HIS glory and spake of HIM." Whose glory does the evangelist refer to, is a question which was never have been raised, or, if raised, would have received but one answer, had it not been that some men, calling themselves Christians, are very much indisposed to honour the Son as they honour the Father. To avoid the necessary conclusion, on the supposition that it refers to Christ, that the "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty," whom we worship, it has been asserted that the pronoun 'his' refers to the Father, addressed as Lord in the thirty-eighth verse, or, if this cannot be granted, that the glory is not that of the person to whom the sixth chapter of Isaiah refers, but of him to whom the fifty-third chapter refers. The pronoun his or him, obviously marks, as usual, the principal subject of discourse, and that obviously is our Lord; and while the reference in the expression, his glory,¹ may be to both

super illicitas cupidines;" who says also, in another place, "*Quorundam catorum perpetratorum facilitas, poena est aliorum precedentium.*" The full curse of sin is, that it ever has the tendency to reproduce itself; the man who sows in sin, reaps in spiritual darkness, which delivers him over to sin; all which is wonderfully expressed by Shakspeare:—

" For when we in our viciousness grow hard,
Oh! mis'ry on't! the wise gods seal our eyes;
In our own filth drop our clear judgments; make us
Adore our errors; laugh at us, while we strut,
To our confusion."

TRENCH'S Notes on the Parables of our Lord, pp. 1

¹ *Αυτου.*

² *Της δεξης αυτου.*

passages referred to, on all the principles of grammar and the common use of language it must refer to the latter. It was the same Word,¹ the only revealer of God, who appeared to Isaiah on a throne high and lifted up, with a train filling the temple, adored by the seraphim with veiled faces, who was made flesh and dwelt among men, who came to his own and was not received by them. The Apostle John does not hesitate to refer to his Lord, one of the most sublime descriptions of the manifested divinity in the Old Testament Scriptures; and it becomes us to remember, that he is our Lord as well as the Lord of angels, and that we should worship him as well as they.

“ Jesus! we hail thee Israel's King!
And now to thee our homage bring;
Nor do we fear to bow the knee,—
They worship God who worship Thee.”

2. The SECOND result of our Lord's ministry, his preaching and his miracles, referred to in the text, is the inward conviction of some of the upper classes that there was truth in his claims,—a conviction, however, which the prevalence of a worldly spirit prevented them from avowing. “Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also, many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”

When it is said that these chief rulers believed in Jesus, the words do not seem to mean more than that they were persuaded in their minds that he was neither a fanatic nor an impostor, but was indeed a teacher sent from God, and the Messiah promised to the Fathers. With the views they had of the nature and design of the Messiah's mission and kingdom, which seem to have been entirely secular, they were not inclined to acknowledge their convictions till his affairs assumed a more promising aspect. They had not the faith of such truth about him as would have made them

¹ Λόγος.

forsake all and follow him ; but they had such a kind and sure of conviction as should have induced them to acknowledge his Divine mission, and put themselves under his

They were, however, prevented from doing this, by fear of the inconveniences and sufferings which were to result from following such a course. The domination of the Jewish rulers, who seem chiefly to belonged to the numerous, and powerful, and active the Pharisees, had, as we read (ix. 22), agreed all "that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he be put out of the synagogue."

The excommunication referred to was a very serious. It included much more in it than merely prohibiting associate, with other Jews, in the worship of the synagogue. No one was allowed to teach, to speak to, to eat or with, the excommunicated individual ; and he was regarded no longer as a member of the commonwealth of Israel as a heathen man and a publican. It necessarily involved on the part of a ruler, loss of office ; and to a person of high rank, and standing well in public estimation, obviously a very formidable evil. These men, with low views of the nature and design of the Messiah's mission and with their thoroughly worldly character, though wiser to conceal their convictions, and to wait till whom they believed to be the Messiah, should place self in a position that would make it safe, and even advantageous, for them to avow their convictions. These men, who can make their convictions wait on their parent interests, are to be found in all countries and Had these men had just views of God's character, the God of truth, and just views of the duty which they were convinced of truth, owed to it and to Him, they would have made public acknowledgment of it at all hazards.¹

¹ This duty is, even in our own times, very imperfectly understood. The best illustration of its importance and obligation ever given, is to be found in Vinet's masterly treatise, "On the Profession of Personal Religious Conviction ; and upon the Separation of Church and State."

But these men loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. The word rendered here "praise,"¹ and very often in other places "glory," signifies approbation, esteem, good opinion. These men obviously looked at things seen and temporal, not at things unseen and eternal. They were under the power of the present evil world, and were not emancipated by the belief of the truth respecting the Divine character, and brought under the power of the world to come. They must have felt, if they thought at all, that they were forfeiting the praise, the approbation, of God; for their conscience, His vicegerent, told them they ought to confess what they believed,—they ought not, trusting to some change of circumstances, to allow truth and right to be outraged unopposed; but they preferred enjoying the advantage which was connected with standing well in the estimation of their fellow men, especially the more influential part of them, and which they saw must be sacrificed if they avowed their convictions. Their belief was but an outside belief. If they had really known and believed the truth respecting Jesus, as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, they could not have helped confessing him; but this supreme esteem of human approbation prevented them from attaining to this faith. In them our Lord's words were verified,—“How can ye believe”—that is, how can ye believe my spiritual, humbling doctrines, the faith of which necessarily infers self-renunciation and sacrifice —“who receive honour (the same word as praise) one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?”

Such, then, were the details, and such the results, of our Lord's ministry. He openly, earnestly, fearlessly, taught the Divinity of his mission; the Divinity of his doctrine; the Divinity of his person; the design of his mission to save; the manner of obtaining an interest in his salvation; and the doom of those who, by continuing in unbelief, excluded themselves from a participation in its blessings;—and he

¹ Δόξα.

confirmed his doctrine by great, numerous, varied, public miracles.

Thus did Jesus teach, and thus did he perform miracles, for three years and a half, throughout Judea and Galilee; and the result was, that, while a few became his devoted disciples, the great body of his countrymen rejected his claims and his doctrines; and a small minority, who were persuaded in their minds that there was truth in these claims, yet, from a fear of forfeiting worldly advantages, concealed their conviction. Neither of these results were, in any degree, discreditable to our Lord. The first originated in a blindness of mind and obduracy of heart, which had been the subject of Old Testament prophecy; the conviction of the second class was honourable to him,—the concealment of it disgraceful only to themselves.

And are not the details and the results of our Lord's ministry in the gospel dispensation, since he ascended to heaven, substantially the same as those of his personal ministry? The same doctrines are taught, the same evidences exhibited; and while a portion—hitherto a very small portion—of those who have enjoyed this ministry believe to the saving of the soul, receive Christ Jesus, and become the children of God through faith in Him, do not the great majority continue in unbelief? And has there not always been a minority, often among the better classes of society, who, while having a rational conviction of the truth of Christianity, practically deny it, never really embrace its doctrines, never submit to its transforming influence, from a prevailing love of the present world?

Let us, my young friends, examine ourselves. Our *status* makes it but the more necessary we should. Do we belong to either of these two classes? Are we unbelievers? or, are we persons who, unfaithful to our convictions, do not act them out; persons who hold the truth, but hold it in unrighteousness? Let us remember that, if we belong to either class, and continue to do so, we are not only unfit for the Christian ministry, but necessarily shut out from any participation

in the blessings of the Christian salvation. The law of the kingdom is, "He that believeth," believeth the truth as it is in Jesus, "shall be saved: "he that believeth not, shall be damned." The word is nigh us, as it was nigh to those to whom our Lord preached, and so is its evidence; they are both here. "If we confess with our mouth the Lord Jesus, believing in our heart that God hath raised him from the dead, we shall be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "He that believeth on me," says the Saviour still, "hath everlasting life; he is not condemned, he shall never come into condemnation; he shall not perish, but shall have eternal life. Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in heaven: whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven."

The ministry of Christ must have results, important results, in the case of all who are its subjects. There is no alternative to those who have enjoyed it, whether personally or by his servants, between "the salvation that is in Him with eternal glory," and a perdition tenfold deeper than of those who never enjoyed this ministry; a doom to which that of Sodom and Gomorrha, of Tyre and Sidon, is comparatively light. Oh! beware of continuing in unbelief. Every sermon you hear, continuing in unbelief, adds to your responsibility, and lessens the probability of your ever becoming, through grace, a partaker of the Christian salvation; deepening spiritual slumber, hardening the stone within into adamant. Beware of resting in a cold, barren orthodoxy, in a mere admission that doctrines are true, while you resist their influence, and act as if they were not true. Increased blindness of mind, increased obduracy of heart, is the natural result of both these courses. These spiritual plagues were not peculiar to the Jews, or confined to the primitive age. I am afraid they are widely spread in our own country and in our own age. Were it not so, could there, amid such abundant means of spiritual illumination,

under the clear and impressive exhibition of Christian truth and evidence,—could there be so much ignorance, and inconsideration, and unbelief, and strangled conviction, and empty profession; such worship of man, such disregard of God, such an over-estimate of the world and time, such an undervaluation of the soul and eternity? Ah! does not Isaiah's character of the Jews but too exactly answer too many among us,—“The heart of this people is fat, their ears are heavy, their eyes are shut; so that they see not with their eyes, they hear not with their ears, they understand not with their hearts. And how can they be converted and healed?” Ah! have we not reason to fear, that there are more fields nigh unto cursing among us, than fields receiving the blessing of God? Many unbelievers, not a few faithful to their convictions, many false professors, few genuine, consistent disciples. The rain cometh oft upon us, but where are the trees of righteousness, where the fruits unto holiness, fruits to the glory of God? Let us fear we provoke the great Husbandman to “command the clouds that they rain no more rain” on us, and gives us up to barrenness we seem to have chosen. “The earth receiveth and drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and beareth forth herbs meet for him by whom it is dressed, receiving blessing from God: but that which beareth briers and thorns is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.”

Christ's personal ministry came to an end. His ministry by his servants, will come to an end too, with every individual. Oh! how fearful will be his lot, whom the close of the gospel ministry leaves either rejecting the truth, or holding it in unrighteousness! May the Lord, the Spirit, give us all sound convictions as to the truth in Jesus, and enable us to add to our faith fortitude,¹ that we may do justice to our convictions, in an honest profession and a corresponding conduct; both calling Jesus Lord, and doing the things which he says!

¹ *Agree.*

And now, my dear young friends, allow me, before dismissing you at this time, to congratulate you on the peculiarly favourable circumstances under which you this day resume your annual labours. In the increased number of your instructors, in the extended sphere of your studies, in the greatly enlarged size of the library, to which you have access to aid you in the prosecution of these studies, and in the scholarships which the munificence of some enlightened liberal individuals have provided for those of you who, by superior talents and acquirement, prove yourselves worthy of them ; you have advantages which none of your predecessors ever enjoyed, in either of the seminaries which now, by the happy union of the Secession and Relief Churches in the United Presbyterian Church, have become one. These advantages will, I trust, be wisely appreciated and carefully improved by you.

The elders of our church met in solemn council have, in the measures they are adopting for elevating the standard of literary and theological attainment among the aspirants to the sacred office, shown themselves to be, like the children of Issachar of old, “men who have understanding of the times.” The state both of the church and of the world imperiously demands a measure of attainment and acquirement, of ability and energy, of dexterity and zeal, above what were requisite to the creditable discharge of the functions of the holy ministry in former periods. What in this respect at all times was desirable, has now become necessary. Their exertions will, I confidently anticipate, be met with a corresponding spirit by you, for whose advantage they are directly intended ; and if they are, by the blessing of our Divine Lord, results highly beneficial both to the church and to the world may be reasonably expected.

You have entered, my young friends, and even the farthest advanced among you have only entered, the wide and fertile field of Christian theology. Your successful prosecution of that noblest of all studies depends, in a great measure, on your allowing the obvious principle,—the principle which

has modelled the whole arrangements of this theological seminary,—that a well-understood Bible lies at the foundation of a sound theology, to exercise its fair influence on your mind and conduct. What is true as a general maxim, is applicable with peculiar emphasis to a science, the elements and the higher principles of which are equally contained in that ancient book the Bible: “*Ex verborum intelligentia pendit cognitio rerum.*”

To understand theology you must understand the Bible; and to the understanding of the Bible the first requisite is a thorough acquaintance with the sacred tongues. It has been said with truth, “*Nihil est aliud theologus quam grammaticus verbi divini;*” and almost all theological error either originates in, or is perpetuated by, misapprehension and misinterpretation of the Holy Scriptures. It is a beautiful as well as just remark of George, Prince of Anhalt, one of the fairest ornaments of the Reformation, “The Scriptures are the swaddling bands¹ of God’s holy child Jesus, and they must be unfolded,—*explicandum est illis*,—if we would wish to see him or make him be seen.”

Seek, then, to make yourselves masters of Hebrew, and of New Testament Greek: for, as Drusius pointedly observes, “*Cum veritas omnis per quam religio orthodoxa consistit, ex recta sacrarum literarum intelligentia tanquam ex fonte dimanet, sacræ autem literæ Ebraica et Græca lingua scriptæ sunt, illud profecto consequitur, ut nisi cui hæ cognitæ et perspectæ sint, ad veritatem docendam, plene nullus instructus esse possit.*”

I would particularly recommend to you the study of the language of the Old Testament, not because it is of more importance in itself, but because in this country it has long been more neglected than that of the language of the New; and I press this on you with the greater urgency, because a knowledge of Hebrew is not only necessary to understand and expound the writings of Moses and the Prophets, but

¹ *σταγυρα.*

because, without such a knowledge, neither the writings of the Apostles, nor the system which they unfold, can be fully or satisfactorily understood or expounded. The whole style of thought, and a large portion of the idiom and construction of the language, of the New Testament, are Hebraistic. The thoughts are the thoughts of Jewish minds; and so remarkably is this the case, that the shortest and most satisfactory way of bringing out the meaning of an obscure word or phrase in the New Testament, is often to translate it into Hebrew. What was very obscure in the one language is plain in the other.

I trust that you will not be content with such a measure of knowledge in the sacred language, as will merely enable you with the help of a grammar and lexicon to translate them into your own language with some degree of ease; but that you will not rest satisfied till the whole phraseology and habits of thought of the inspired writers become so familiar to you, that the reading and understanding of the original Scriptures shall be as easy to you, as the reading and understanding of a version of them in our vernacular tongue. I should like you all placed beyond the reach of the sarcastic remark of Drusius, which, though made more than two hundred years ago, is still but too applicable to many Christian divines: "*Quidam sibi persuadent abunde jam instructos esse se iis omnibus rebus quæ theologo necessariae sunt, si possint, de dogmatibus hodie controversis, pro concione, quæ trita et vulgata sunt, dicere, cum interea ne paginam quidem unam illius libri cujus se interpretes esse profitentur, sic ut oportet, intelligant.*"

Let the whole course of your studies tend to this point, the more thorough acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures. Take for your motto the Apostle's words, "Give thyself wholly to these things," "Be instant in them," "One thing I do;"¹ and adopt the resolution of Erasmus, "*Mihi decretum est in sacris immori literis: in hoc colloco otium et negotium.*"

¹ *ἑνὶ ἡ τούτοις.* 'Εν δι. 1 Tim. iv. 15. Phil. iii. 13.

I would think it wrong to close this address, unduly protracted as it has been, without putting you in mind of the infinite importance of conducting your studies in the spirit of an enlightened and affectionate Christian devotion. A poet has said, "An undevout astronomer is mad." What shall we say of an undevout theologian? Yet such madness may exist. Alas! it is to be feared, they are no rarities. . . know nothing more calculated to sear the conscience and to ossify the heart than the undevout study of the word of God.

"A Scripture interpreter," says Wiclif, "should be a man of prayer: he needs the internal instruction of the primary Teacher." I am not quite prepared to say with Luther "*Bene studuit qui bene oravit*;" but I am quite ready to say, "*Non bene studuit qui non bene oravit*." I believe a man may be truly, eminently pious, and yet but an indifferent student of divinity; but no man can be a good, or, in the best sense of the word, a successful, student of divinity who is a stranger to Christian devotion.

Arrived at another stage in your progress towards public Christian usefulness, "thank God and take courage." Look backward with gratitude, and forward with hope. If, as I trust is the case, you have devoted yourselves unreservedly to the service of Christ, you will never regret the surrender you have made. "There is no master," said a good man and a good minister of Jesus Christ when drawing near the close of his course, "There is no master like Christ; no service so pleasant and profitable as his; no reward so full satisfying, and permanent as his." Begin, then, all things from him; carry on all with and through him; and let all things aim at, and end in, him. Let Christ be all in all. "Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Christ Jesus, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

A D D E N D A.

NOTE, VOL. I. p. 18, l. 9.

In the *Επιστολη προς Διογνητον*, incorrectly attributed to Justin Martyr—written probably in the earlier part of the second century—the nature of the separation of Christians from mankind generally is thus described:—"The Christians are not separated from other men by earthly abode, by language, or by customs. They dwell nowhere in cities by themselves; they do not use a different language, nor affect a singular mode of life. They dwell in the cities of the Greeks and of the barbarians, each as his lot has been cast; and, while they conform to the usages of the country in respect to dress, food, and other things pertaining to the outward life, they yet show a peculiarity of conduct wonderful and striking to all."

NOTE, VOL. II. p. 44, l. 20.

From this declaration the conclusion has been drawn, that none are fit subjects of baptism but such as have "the good conscience," and can give the corresponding "answer" or profession. The conclusion, though plausible, is not warranted. The Apostle Paul states, that 'the true circumcision before God, is not the outward circumcision of the flesh, but the inward circumcision of the heart and spirit.'—Rom. ii. 29. But it would be a false conclusion, 'therefore Jewish infants, who are not capable of that spiritual circumcision, or of the profession of it, ought not to be circumcised.' The fair conclusion from Paul's statement is, no uncircumcised adult should be admitted to circumcision who does not seem to have the circumcision of the heart. The fair conclusion from Peter's is, no unbaptized adult should be admitted to baptism without seeming to have the good conscience, and making profession of it. Whether any infants, and if any, what infants may be baptized, is a question which must be determined by its own evidence. We know that the infants of Jews were the proper subjects of circumcision, notwithstanding the declaration in Rom. ii. 29: And the infants of

Christians *may* be proper subjects of baptism, notwithstanding the declaration made here. Whether they are so, is a question on which good men are divided; and every thing is a step towards their agreement, which distinctly marks what has, and what has not, a bearing on its determination. If the irrelevant arguments on both sides were but put aside, the satisfactory decision of this question, which has causelessly divided the Church of Christ, and produced a great deal of unchristian feeling, would be greatly facilitated.

NOTE, VOL. III. p. 84, l. 10.

Christians were persecuted just because they were Christians. The words of Tertullian are remarkable:—"Non scelus aliquod in causa, sed nomen Christianus, si nullius criminis reus, nomen valde infestum." Not less remarkable are the words of Pliny to Trajan (Epistt. x. 97):—"Cognitionibus de Christianis interfui nunquam; ides nescio quid et quatenus aut puniri soleat, aut quæri. Nec mediocriter hesitavi *an nomen ipsum, etiamsi flagitiis careat*, an flagitia cohærantia nomini pumantur."

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Page 5, line 14 from the bottom—*for* is, *read* in.

— 64, — 1 from the bottom—*for* waters, *read* works.

— 108, — 6—*for* the rulers of, *read* rulers in.

— 108, — 4—*for* Apostles' extraordinary, *read* Apostles, extraordinary.

— 108, — 5—*for* elders' ordinary, *read* elders, ordinary.

— 108, — 10 from the bottom—*for* Christians, *read* Christian.

— 112, — 9—*for* elder feeding, that is, exercising, the taking care of, *read*, elder superintending, that is, taking care of.

— 114, — 8 from the bottom—*for* causing, *read* convey.

— 114, — 8 from the bottom—*for* heat, *read* light.

— 120, — 14—*for* makes, *read* make.

— 133 6 from the bottom—transpose the clauses, "not ambitiously to display or establish superiority and rule; *and* "not to glorify themselves, but to edify the brethren;"

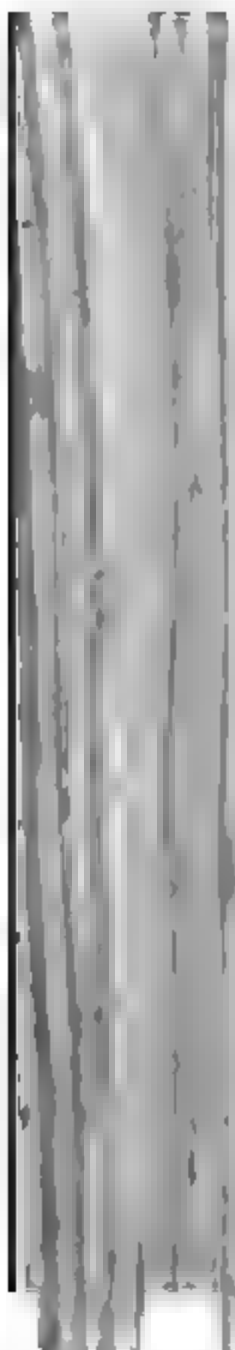
— 143 1 from the bottom—*for* paid, *read* fixed.

— 152, Note (4)—*for* Salmero, *read* Salmeron.

— 161, — 13—delete "more."

— 361, — 11—*for* grave, *read* cross.

— 496, — 1 from the bottom—*for* pumantur, *read* puniantur.



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